

One of the first memories I have is when I was about four years old. My mom got out of Chowchilla State Prison — the women's facility... That was one of the happiest moments in my life.

read the rest of Chango's POW on page 10



Our staff would like to welcome y'all back to another stupendous issue of The Beat Within Publication (14.07). Another week... and another fabulous issue of great writings. Another week closer to home for some of us. Another week of county food for some of us. Another week of spreading for some of us. Another week of work for some of us, yet, another week of life for everybody reading this right now. We would like to start off by thanking all the writers that participated to put this extraordinary issue together. All you writers from the pen, out to the halls have been doing a great job not holding back and pouring down everything on paper, so we would like to commend you on that.

So I, Omar, staff member of The Beat Within wanted to tell you all about a little encounter I had with the police last night after I left the gym. So I got out of the gym and hopped on BART to get off at my stop, so I can catch the bus to my homey's house to pick up some music CDs. So I get off on my turf and wait for the bus to come. I see a homey postin' it there to, so we say "what's up," and just light-weight start chopping it up.

We're watching the police walking around right down the street, knowing they're up to something, but I know I am not doing anything wrong. Like I said, I'm waiting for the bus to come, so I'm not really tripping anyway. All of sudden two squad cars roll up on us, and a few more police come out of nowhere and start searching us, questioning us. They even handcuffed the homey and he didn't even do anything wrong.

They did the regular procedure: asked us if we had weapons or drugs. They were being jerks off the bat, but what cop isn't a jerk when they're searching you and assuming that you're doing something illegal? I wasn't really tripping off what they were doing 'cause you know I am on paper-work, and they pulled up my file and found out I had an ol' firearms case. So they started going through my backpack and all that good shhh.

The other homey was trying to talk back to the officers and I told him to just chill. I could see the anger in his eyes and hear the anger and frustration in his voice, but you're not gonna make the situation better by talking mess to the police.

I told him to relax. I was mad no doubt, but I played it off real good. I been through this before and it ain't nothing new to me. It's like everywhere I go police seem to think I'm up to no good. And it doesn't surprise me when I get stopped. I don't get nervous anymore 'cause really, I don't be carrying shhh on me to warrant fear.

I'm not gonna lie to you folks. I was mad as hell! They were talking major shhh and trying to get in my head. A couple of the cops that knew me, were asking me stupid questions, and also asking me about recent shootings and if a war was going to erupt. I just kept playing stupid with them and said I didn't know what they were talking about and they seem to get madder. They were like "You didn't hear about those fools that got shot right here?"

I was like "Nope. Don't know what you are talking about." They were asking me questions like, "Why did they let you out of jail?" Plus, asked if I was high, and how was my truck doing. You know, they were being stupid. They made me take off my shirt and show them all my tattoos, too.

It's funny how it takes 7 to 8 cops to white card just two guys. While this is going on, everybody and they mama is looking at us. Everybody at the bus stop is looking and everybody driving by, people in the bars, in McDonald's, in the Taqueria's were looking. I'm figuring because they want to show the community and us that they know what's up. I felt like I was on stage again. All eyes on me.

After a while all the shhh talking stopped making me mad and started boosting my ego. I felt like, "Damn, these cops want to give me this much attention and cause a big scene to where everybody wants to look at us, and we're

not even doing anything wrong!" I started thinking how if it wasn't for me, these cops wouldn't even have jobs, not just me, but I mean us. (Everybody stuck in the system, or out there allegedly breaking the law).

Finally I asked them if I could go, and they said "not after you throw up a gang sign, or do you want us to drop you off on rival territory?" As much as I wanted to go off on this guy — I even envisioned myself just taking his baton stick and beating him over the head with it — that wouldn't do anything but either get me molly-whopped by these seven cops, or possibly have me shot dead.

So I kept it moving and hopped on the next bus that stopped by. I was just thinking to myself how angry they made me feel. But I also noticed how angry they felt when they had to let me go because they didn't find anything on me. They were mad. I knew they were mad. People don't talk shhh for no reason. For whatever reason, I made them feel uncomfortable with themselves to the point where they had to resort to putting me down so they can feel better about themselves.

And at the end of the day these police really don't know me. They didn't know that I got off work late, and I had just come from the gym. They don't know jack about me or what I'm 'bout. I know what they're about. But this little battle right here I consider to be a victory. Why? You would ask me, why would I consider this a victory? Because I walked away with my pride and most importantly my freedom.

And those are the only battles that we can win against the police. You not only have to pick and choose your battles, but also how you fight them. And walking away without any cuffs is the best way to win. That's when some cops get really mad. And as I'm writing this right now, I am laughing, because the system got me twisted if they think I'm gonna let them win. One love to everybody locked down and to those doing the right thing in the free world! I'm out.

With all this in mind, lets give you readers the topics that were discussed prior to the writing that is featured in this wonderful issue...

First topic, "Last words" – If for some reason you were going to have to leave your town/ your home, or move away from your community for a long time, no telling when you would return, would you regret not having told someone something? Tell us what you want to say, who you want to say it to, and why you've kept the message to yourself all this time.

The second topic, "That picture" – Pictures are taken all the time, from birthday parties, holidays, celebrations, and just good times with those we love. Out of the many pictures that are taken, there are always a few precious pictures that stand out or mean more to us than others. This week we want you to tell us of that special one picture that you will carry with you in your heart forever. What is it about this picture that you cherish? Tell us the story behind this snap-shot/moment in time.

Last but not least, "I'm not feeling the topics tonight" – Okay, we know you don't always want to write the weekly topics. However, we know that some weeks, a lot of things are going through your mind. You may have had a particularly tough court date. Your family may have come to visit you and gave you news about life on the outs. You may have had a really amazing phone conversation with your loved one, or found yourself in conflict with a friend or peer. We want you to talk about these experiences... what's on your mind?

Thanks for reading this latest editorial note, this issue goes out to our young writers in Monterey County Juvenile Hall who step up big this week! Plus, A big thank you to all those who work in their hall and opened the door for Sam "the man" Peterson and our newest colleague Sarah D'Amico to come through and deliver The Beat Within program!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Monterey : Sam Peterson and Sarah Damico

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Counselors' Corner

From The Beat: Today we are proud to present a poem by one of our favorite counselors ... a reminder of just how much emotion and caring is behind the people you see every day. Thank you Ms. Rivera for sharing your feelings and struggles with The Beat and all its readers!

Counselor's Corner

People's perception of me is that I'm soft, weak, emotional. While their observation is interesting it is far off the mark.

There's something in me something that nobody can understand and that only those I truly care about know.

I have pain, suffering, anger, & a darkness that I don't let show.

If I let out what is locked deep inside I would be a bad person I wouldn't care for others, sometimes I wish I could, just let it out.

Instead I fight everyday to be that smile, that voice, that face that people seek and need. I fight myself to help rather than hurt.

I'm capable of both.

I love deeply, I trust wanly, and I care unconditionally, I'm loyal so I'm hurt.

I hurt because they don't know.

Their perception is what they know and what I let them think.

-Ms. Rivera, Counselor, Alameda County

Before, But Now I Moved On

When I was young I was easy to teach
But then I fell in love with money and streets
I was raised on Seventh Street
Where there were drugs, fights, shooting, and police
I followed my friends and did the wrong things
When this took place I was only thirteen
I began getting involved with my surroundings
And caught more charges and smoking green
These times was fun, but also dumb
I would just like to say that I am done
I am now on the right track
And told myself that I won't go back
Those experiences was fun but did not last
So I forgive myself for what I did in the past.

-Jeffrey
From The Beat: Jeffrey, this is a great poem. We especially love the first line – “When I was young I was easy to teach” – and the last – “So I forgive myself for what I did in the past.” You have a way with words. We look forward to hearing a lot more from you. What was the turning point when you realized that the streets wouldn't last?

Bringing Back The Dead

If I will bring somebody back, it will be my grandfather, because he did a lot for the family. And he always told me to do right but I really didn't listen. And if he was to come back I promise I will listen to everything he try to tell me.
When he died that made me mess up really bad because I didn't care about nobody. And he always told me that he wasn't going to be here forever and I didn't look at it that way. And I know if he was still living right now I would not be doing the things I do now. And now when I think about him it makes me feel good, because I know he's in a better place.

-Stephen
From The Beat: What a great tribute to your grandfather, it sounds like he had a big influence on you. We are sorry for your loss. It seems like his influence still inspires you, which is a great thing. – you can still show him how you've chosen a better path. What would you want to tell him if he were here? What would you want him to know about you? You are very wise about how his death affected you and your actions, we look forward to hearing more from you.

African American

Black, color of the night sky
Mind as bright as a sunshine
I can think as high as a cloud
My brain feels like it's ten pounds
Glad of my color, but sometimes I wonder
Would my relatives be happy or sad
Of all the crimes and bad times
Feel like we all stuck in a mine
But where the sun show
The wind will blow
All the bad times
I'll think in my mind
Everything will be okay
Just walk this way
Into the light where God will help you fight
Everything will be alright
My color is my brother.

-Marcus
From The Beat: This is an incredible poem. We love how you really worked on it, editing it as you wrote, finding the right words you wanted to use. You use so many great images – the mine, and the sun and the wind – and color. You really have a great gift and we hope you continue to develop your writing – it can take you far! Are there relatives that you would like to share this with?

If I Was a Parent

If I was a parent, my heart would flow like a current
If I was a parent, I wouldn't want my son to have a warrant
If I was a parent, I'd tell my son what I've learned
If I was a parent, I would let myself go on the right turn.

-Jeff
From The Beat: Great images Jeff, especially the first one about the heart flowing like a current. We also like what you said about telling your son what you've learned – we agree that would be a great thing to do if you were a parent.

What Money Can't Do

See money can't fix or get you love or hurt
When you're shot up dying, money can't wipe the blood off your shirt
Even sneaky people with smirks
What money can't fix, money can't buy
Money can't fix the tears that drop from your eyes
Money makes people lie
It makes people cry
And in some situations, money can make you die
But if you offer money, some people wouldn't ask why
But I see beyond money in the sky.

-Paul
From The Beat: Lots of wisdom in these lines, Paul, and great use of words. We agree with what you said about how money can't fix so many things. What do you see when you see beyond the “money in the sky?” What's around the bend that you're hoping to achieve when you get out?

Dead Silence Flows Through My City

January 19th, the day seemed so clean
Until I got the call my cousin
will never be seen.
He died on the way to the hospital,
going to be seen.
Three shots tore into his body,
Now I can't hear nobody.
Dead silence flows through my city
A soldier was gone
And he was ever so witty.

-Lil' Chopp
From The Beat: This is a great poem, full of heart and wonderful images. Thank you for writing about your cousin - RIP. You have a way with words and we look forward to hearing more from you.

Bringing Back Dead

What can I do, is going through my head
'Cause only if I could bring back the dead
First Grandpa, then my man Lil' Ed
If only I could bring back the dead
What if it's me, when I'm not prepared?
Who will bring me back from the dead?
My life should be long since I am so young
There's facts in my head, but death's not one
I'm only so strong, not for death everyday
From the people in my family, to the ones around my way
So if I could bring back the dead, I will bring back Big Choke
And my cousin's father for bringing me hope.

-Rodney
From The Beat: We really enjoyed this poem Rodney, and the way you were able to make it so deep with such a great rhyme. We particularly liked the line that asked – What if it's me and I'm not prepared? – and what you said about hope. How did he give you hope? Who would you like to give hope to? We hope you keep up this great writing since it seems to come easy for you, and you have a lot to teach.



My Life at Oak Hill

Hi, my name is Tyron and I'm a resident of Oak Hill Youth Center. I've been here for one year and it's been a bumpy road, but I'm finding my way through it very slowly. I believe I'm gonna get through it so I can go home to my family and friends.

Even though I'm down here that doesn't mean I'm a bad child or anything, I just made a mistake. But I'm learning things I didn't learn when I was home. I think this was a good thing that this happened to me 'cause I could've been dead or shot up somewhere.

The staff in Genesis are really trying to help me better myself and I do thank them for that, I just don't know how to show them, especially Ms. Hardy and Ms. Simms. I'm trying to do my best to better myself but it takes time, I can't rush it.

There will be one day I will go home and live my real life instead of being told when to eat, sleep and urinate. I'm almost there, just need to keep it up and I will be home soon.

-Tyron
From The Beat: This is an excellent piece about how your see your time, Tyron, and what you've gained from it. Thank you for writing so openly and honestly. What advice would you give someone who was facing some of the same choices?

Bringing Back the Dead

If I could bring back the dead I would bring back my father
But I sit and think why even bother
But yet and still, still that's my father
I was too young to remember what he said
But I still would bring him back from the dead
Why can't we have two lives if a cat has nine
And I hate thinking about the past, just leave it behind
But what if you and the person you bring back don't get along
That's just like singing a funeral song
But when it's all said and done I would bring my father back from the dead
'Til this day I still think about him when I'm laying in my bed.

-Paul
From The Beat: This is an incredible poem, Paul, you have a great gift with rhyming and with making the words have great meaning – way to go. We especially like what you said “why can't we have two lives” – what would you do if you had a second life? We would love to see you write on that – “My Second Life” and everything you'd want to be, and accomplish. Keep up the excellent writing!

Words of Wisdom

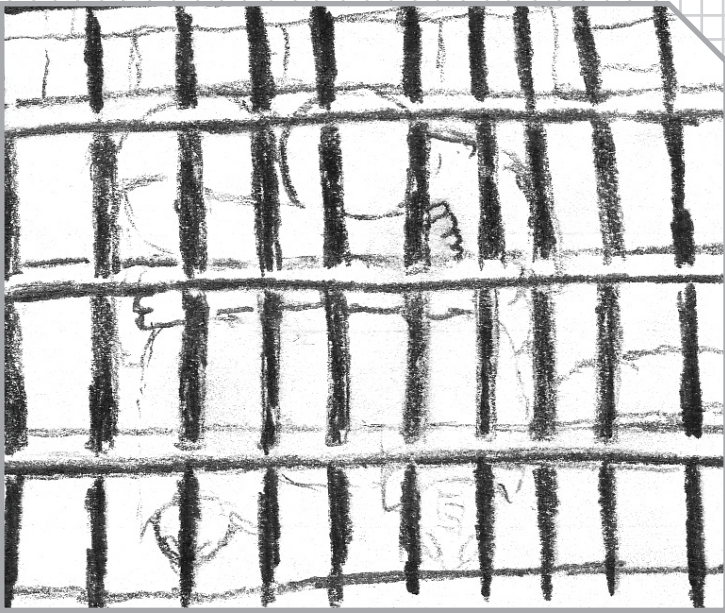
Money can't bring people that died back.
Bringing back the dead is like telling the police to stop locking people up.
The day I become a parent, it will rain fire.

-Decole
From The Beat: We like how you tried to write short sentences on each topic – next time, we'd love for you to expand on each – you have a lot to share!

I Love My Friend

I need my ninja, my ninja need me
When he was here, he couldn't never beat me
That's why I miss him, I know he miss me
We was always together
He hook me up with this girl, now we belong with each other
I love him, he love me
I'm going to see you when I get there
Rest in Peace
R-I-P Lip and Midnight

-Leonard
From The Beat: This is a powerful piece about how friends can be there for each other, and we are sorry for the loss of your friend. What kind of qualities did he have that you admire? Is there a quality that you would like to show someone else in being a good friend to them?



What Spring Means to Me

I love to play sports mostly all year round, and chill with my family, and go to school and get my education.
I love the Spring because it's getting hot outside for me to play sports with my little brothers. But the Spring time is a flaky because it starts snowing, then raining, but anyway I like the Spring.
My favorite sports are basketball, football, hockey, tennis, ping-pong, Chinese push-ups.
Smelling in the Spring, I can smell flowers, cook out, laundry, fresh air.

-Curtis
From The Beat: Thanks for writing about what is so great about Spring – the chance to get outside and enjoy sports and the activities that the warm weather brings. You captured it very well with the smells and also the fresh air. Some say Spring brings new beginnings – what new beginning would you want to create?

Spring, and If I was a Parent

When I think about Spring I think about relaxing and relieving my emotions. I also think about life. All I do is smoke and get money.

If I was a parent I would do the best for my kids. I would help my kids finish school and make them go to school and get good grades like my mother did me.

-Patrick
From the Beat: That is great that your mother has been there for you like that with school and the good grades. What are some ways to relieve your emotions besides smoking? What sports do you most like to play in the Spring?

The Neighborhood is More Alive in Spring

What comes to mind when the weather gets warm is cookouts, basketball, smoking, and chillin' outside. Also just coolin' in the nice beautiful weather, bringing out all the fly spring gear or summer gear. Even riding dirt bikes, driving cars.

The girls come out when it's warm. The neighborhood is much more alive instead of being dead, even block parties, going to the functions.

-Cheeto
From The Beat: Great job in describing what Spring has to offer, and what you most enjoy. Do you have a favorite memory from a Spring that's passed?

Most Wanted

Wanted for blowing up the scene, straight off the mic, Spitting lethal lyrics, rising above the hype Armed and dangerous for those weak of the heart Shutting down ninjas before they start Last seen on the video screen Network television to cable TV From street corners.

-Eric
From The Beat: There are some powerful images here and we want to encourage you to keep writing, without glorifying the negative. You have a lot of words at your disposal and we'd love to hear more poetry from you and the kind of life you'd like to create.

My Grandfather

If I could bring back the dead it would be my grandfather because he was more like a father to me. We both looked alike and I wish he didn't have to go through what he had to go through.

-Senquea
From The Beat: That's great that you had such a connection with him, thanks for writing about him. What would you most want him to know about you if you could speak to him today?

Dirt Bikes and Four-wheelers

What comes to my mind when the weather gets warm out is a cookout, basketball, chilling outside smoking, coolin' it with my girls inside and outside. Wearing some clothes like shorts and stuff like that.

This is the time that I bring out the dirt bikes and four-wheels to ride. I love the weather when it's not too cold and not too hot, just right. It's a time to get ready for the summer, and good weather. Neighborhood block parties and go-go's.

-Lo
From The Beat: You really captured Spring here with the weather, clothes, sports and activities - we like how you described it from different angles. Some say that Spring is a time to do "Spring cleaning" and start things fresh - what would you most like to start this Spring?

Money – Hard to Tell Real Friends

Some people are just around because I got money, and I hate that shhh, because they are not my friends for real. That's something that I hate the most because you will never know who loves you, and people use money so they will try to use you for it.

-Benjamin
From The Beat: How can you tell if someone is "for real"? Who is the best friend you've ever had? Is he still your friend? Keep up the writing, you have a lot to share, and we look forward to hearing more from you.

My Life

My life is filled with crimes
In my life I seen young kids dying
My features is blind
My life is design
No one to cry to but mine
Red dot blue flames take over mines
And I watch kids dying
My life!

-Brandon
From The Beat: You have seen a lot for someone so young, and we hope that you have time to enjoy your life too, when it's not so stressful.

What Money Can't Fix

Money can't bring back my life.
Money can't bring back my soul.
Money can't bring back my heart.
Money can't bring back my love.
Money can't bring back my spirit.
That's what money can't fix.

-Patrick
From The Beat: These are great examples Patrick, we agree with you. What are the keys to bringing back these things that you write about here? Thanks for writing and keep up the good work - we know that you've been writing week in and week out and you're doing a great job.

Money Can't Fix the Killing

Money can't fix a relationship and money can't fix the death of a loved one and money can't fix the killing on the streets.

If I was a parent, I would make sure things are in order with my life.

-Senquea
From The Beat: That's so true, we agree with what you said. We admire that you would want to have everything in order when you were a parent. Keep up the writing, and we look forward to hearing more from you.

My Girl

My girl is cute, she is nice
She's my type
Sometimes she saves my life
We watch movies, sometimes we get in fights
In my head I think couples get into it
My watch is nice
But she is right
She tells me to do right
And still I do wrong.

-Brandon
From The Beat: What are some of the ways that she tells you to "do right?" In what ways has she saved your life? That's great that you have someone who cares about you like that - what do you want to tell her now?

No Giving A Shhh, Yet...

As I speak to the people in here with me I notice that out there in the world we're all tough. Most of us are never home, fighting and not giving a shhh about anything, but in here we realize that home is where we want to be.

-Ana
From The Beat: Now that you've made this realization how will you change your lifestyle once you're out of the hall?

I Love You

Since the first day I met you I knew we were meant to be together.
Since the first day you looked handsome,
but I don't like you just for that... your feelings are just so nice.
You opened my heart to the truth and now I have faith and power
to let the world know that no matter
what happens I'll still be there for you.
You are the only one I have now and yes were meant to be.

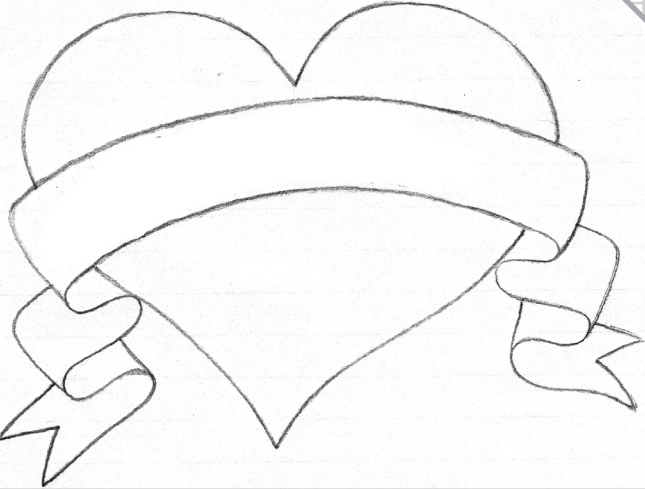
- Green Eyes
From The Beat: It is great that you have somebody in your life that you're able trust and fall back on during the rough patches. Hope you can get your life back on track and he is there helping you see a better place.



I Put My Mind to the Test

When my mom cries it feels like a rainy day and for me being locked up is still the same.
She cries for the son that ended up this way.
I will be released in a couple of days and soon the sun will rise again,
I promised the Lord I would follow his path.
Now my mind feels free all the time.
I put my mind to the test knowing everything is going well again.
There are two people that always got my back and that's my mom and dad... that I always trust.
Don't let your friends takeover your mind your parent care and love you all the time.

-Pollo
From The Beat: Pollo, we're glad to hear you'll be released soon. It sounds like you have a lot of respect for your parents and it sounds like they really care about you. Show them the respect you have and continue on your path and everything will continue to go well.



Mad At Dad

My dad is so mean because he makes me want to cry right now. Because it's like he was not there for me at all. I was so made at him because he made me cry so bad he didn't even say sorry. I was mad. I want him out of my life right now because I hate him and all the things he did to my family and me. I am mad at him 'til he dies.

-Ash
From The Beat: Ash, we know how difficult it must be to express what your feeling. Keep writing your feelings down. Is there somebody you can talk to about this? We really appreciate your participation with us.

My Life

When I was growing up my family made me believe life was beautiful and special.

Now as I'm older and branching far away from my family I see what they didn't want me to see. The things they kept me sheltered from for so long. My mother looks at me with tears in her eyes, yelling at me telling me the monster this world has turned me into, explaining why she tried her hardest to keep me away from everything. Now I know what she meant. This world has become ugly. The things it does to people is unrealistic.

-Ladie
From The Beat: The realities of "life" can be harsh and there are some things we should all be sheltered from. Unfortunately that isn't always possible. Life can be beautiful if you give it that opportunity. Keep you head up Ladie!

Labeled

Been told I'm a menace
Anger resides deep down fo' sure, can you feel?
Black hearts surrounded me
Influence me to chase chaos like bounty
Seems like the devil has found me.
And do I think about escaping his grasp?
Yes, for sure, quick and fast.
Hard and ready
Save me from the black world I roll through slow and steady.
Visions of paradise and peace
Sets me in a state of well being, laughter and happiness start to increase.

-Young Menace
From The Beat: Although we cut a couple lines, you deliver a good piece. Hopefully the laughter and happiness will continue to increase.

When You Hurt the People You Love

Sometimes the people you love tell you to do the good thing. But sometimes it is hard to do the good thing when you are a member of a gang, but right now in jail you're thinking why I can't listen to my family. Why do I do the wrong thing - why can't I do the good thing?

That's why I'm here because I was not listening to the people that love me. I was always with the people that love me, but right now I have not seen the people that love me in 2 months. And that is the way I hurt my family. And I want to get out to immigration detention and be deported, and I do not have people over there that love me.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: Ricardo - it's too bad that you are learning the hard way, but it sounds like you've recognized that doing the right thing is not always easy - and it may not be what you want to do, but it's what you need to do. We hope that you can stay away from the gang life and turn your life around - listen to the people who love and care for you, and want you to succeed.

How to Get Through the System

What's up Beat, I'm facing another year at the Youth Center but I know what I got to do and hopefully it will help others.

All of us just need to finish our time and stop running, if we do that we'll get through the system and hopefully get off probation. Thanks Beat, hit you up next time.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Lil' Mike - we are glad to hear you are recognizing the importance of facing your problems or issues head on, instead of running from them. It is not an easy thing to do, but you are absolutely correct that if you don't deal with it now, these patterns tend to repeat themselves. We are rooting for you to get through the system and get back to your family and friends.

My Fiance and Family

What matters most to me is my fiancé and family. My fiancé is basically my family so my family just needed to include her. It's family over money off the top. I'll shine off a million dollars for the love of my family. I mean that to my heart. I'd give it up for my family, not all of me but a lot.

-Rico

From The Beat: It's good that your family is more important to you than money. As the saying goes, 'money can't buy happiness.' Don't forget to let your family know how much they mean to you.

Wasted Days

Many days have passed, with many more to come. But I can't think of a time when any of these days were fun. As each day goes by I grow more tired and bored. Being here has no purpose, it's like a dull blade for sword. The days don't go any faster they just seem to go so slow, that's why I express to The Beat because it seems like they really know. But after all the wasted days, and all the wasted months, I'm glad The Beat was here, to show a little fun.

-D

From The Beat: Thanks for the 'shout-out' - we're glad to know that we've brought a little fun. Every action has a consequence - being locked up is not necessarily meant to be fun. What you choose to make of a situation, whether you're locked up or not, is your own responsibility. What is important is to make the most of what you've been given. We hope you can turn this not so positive experience into something that you can learn from. Again, a very well-written piece.

Thoguths

The thing that matters most to me is my family.

I love them a lot.

I miss them terribly, and I can't wait to see them.

A person I know just killed himself this week.

-Echo

From The Beat: Life is very precious - it is too bad that this person's life ended before it naturally should have. We hope you will live your life to its fullest, and strive to make a difference to those most important around you.

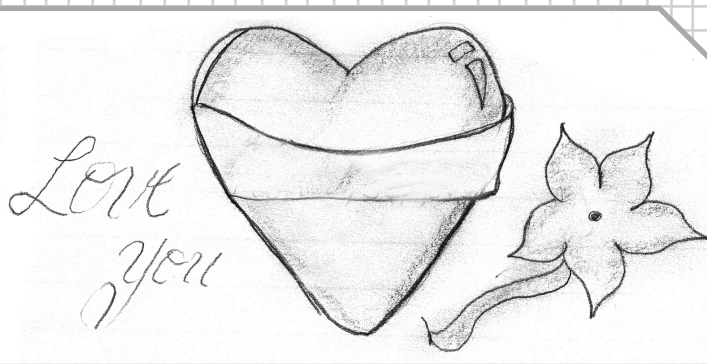
My Loss

Things will never be the same since you left my life. I remember those feelings I had inside when I told you I love you... you knew it was true. I could say 1,000 things that I loved about you. All those days spent and now I feel like they're gone.

I wonder and wish when you will come back home. I never thought my worst nightmare would come true, you're gone forever but I will always love you. You were the only person who I felt loved me and since you've been gone I've been so lonely. No more pictures to be taken no more stories to be sharing no more "hi" and "bye" just sorrow and cries. I will never forget you. I hope those last moments you were thinking of me.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: Vanessa, we're sorry to hear about your loss. Cherish the memories you have. Please keep writing about your feelings and don't be afraid to express your emotions not only on paper, but with someone you trust as well.



Why We Come to Juvenile Hall

I don't know why we all come in here - now we all know why. We all come in here because to try to fit in. We all come in here because who we thought was our best friend wasn't. We all come in here because we think we are tough. We all come in here because we are at the wrong place at the wrong time. We come in here because we make dumb decisions. We all come in here because the person we look up to tells us it's right but it is wrong. We all come in here sometimes for stress. That's why we all come in here.

-Jamarius

From The Beat: Jamarius - it is disappointing when someone who you think is your friend does not always act in your best interest. You also mention 'we all come in here sometimes for stress' - there are plenty of positive ways (exercise, hobbies, helping others) to deal with stress, rather than making choices that hurt others and yourself. Ultimately you are responsible for your own actions, even if it was someone else's idea. If someone is trying to tell you to do something that you think is wrong, use your own judgment, as it is ultimately your choice.

Is It My Fault?

First, second, third, fourth and fifth.

It's my fifth time here - at first I thought I came in for a mistake, but now I'm thinking about it. It's all my fault. I was the one who chose my path. I chose to be who I am. I got no one to blame, but myself.

I used to say it's my parents, they're too mean to me. If you feel like that, check yourself because it's all on you. It has always been on you, don't blame it on someone else but yourself and you will pay the price.

Now I'm here locked down, not knowing what to do, but think about my court date - "Will the judge give me a break, will he believe the words I say, will he know where I'm coming from?" That's what I tell myself like twelve times a day....finally my dispositional court came, I was ready...I was not.

"This is your fifth time coming in here for a fight, your mom is over there crying, and you're telling me that it's all a misunderstanding."

I froze when I heard those words come out of the judge's mouth, he know I had nothing to say so he just sentenced me on the spot. 75 days was the judge's sentence.

"What in the hell am I going to do for 75 days in here," is what I said. I'm paying the price. It's the only reason I got.

Everything you do in this world you'll have a price to pay, good or bad. That's the way I learned things. All I got to do now is wait and get used to the bossing,, and incarceration of Juvenile Hall, and think of all the changes I'll have to make when I got out, because if I don't my sentence could be a lot worse if I come again, which I hope not.

-Rob

From The Beat: Rob - it sounds like you've already learned your lesson. Taking responsibility for your own actions is very important. While some people grow up in less fortunate situations than others, we are all bound by the same rules. Unfortunately, life is not fair and everyone goes through life differently. While someone else may seem to have had an 'easier' life, you never know what his/her story is. Ultimately you must decide for yourself the person you want to be. Actions speak louder than words - we hope you'll show your family and the judge who you really are, and that you don't come back here for a sixth time.

Two Special People

What matters to me most is my girlfriend and sister. These two people mean the world to me. I can't wait to get out and be the man and Big brother that I should be.

-Youngster

From The Beat: Have you thought about how you're going to be the man and Big brother that you should be? Make sure you set a good example so that your little brother will have someone to look up to, and so that you'll be around for him.

Here in The Hall

When I first got here I didn't know what to expect. They put me in a room and I started to think and I knew I was a suspect. It's not cool to be in here. To tell you the truth you are making yourself look like a fool.

The people that look up to you the most are shocked that you are in here.

It's hard to get away from the bad but you got to find a way to good. Just follow God to the neighborhood.

-J Rok

From The Beat: Do you think you'll stay away from the bad and find the good? Keep writing us with updates. By the way, what's gonna happen to you upon following God to your neighborhood?

Something to Think About

Locked up sucks right, but the real question is what are you going to do to get out? I think there's only two ways, yeah you can just do the program and hope to get out, second, you can put it in your head that you're gonna do good no matter what and do your best and you know you're gonna get out. But ultimately it's up to you what you want with your life, to go down a destructive path, be in and out of jail, then prison, wasting years, months in there wishing, praying you were out, I am speaking truth.

It's up to people to decide what their future holds, but I know one thing, this ain't a place where I want to spend the rest of my life. Maybe some other people, but not me, and I know what I got to do, keep my head up, forget or block out what everybody thinks of me or what they say of me, I have a future and it's for sure not in here. I got to get out and really live life because we only got one, and I ain't wasting it in here.

So I got to do what's right, not for the friends because they don't last. I got to do what's right for my loved ones and the ones who truly care for my life and what I do with it.

-Bandido

From The Beat: Bandido - when you're faced with the choice to make difficult decisions, remember what you wrote here, and remember your plan to make a better life for yourself - it is easy to get caught up in the moment, so make sure you make the right decisions. We hope you continue on the path of good choices and keep your nose clean.



My Lil' Sis and Big Brother

Man, pictures at a time like this. Away from all your loved ones that can't come visit you. The homies send you a picture and the staff won't give it to you. They say it's gang related or that you can only have pictures of the family. All of my boys said that they sent me some pictures. Where they at? I ain't got 'em yet?

There is this picture I got of my bro, my little sister and me. I look at it all the time and wish that I could touch their faces. Has me thinking about why I can't be there for my lil' sister at a time when she needs me most. Lookin' at my bro and thinking about all the things we did together, how much time is he gonna get? When will it get better? In reality he is a fence and a street away from me, but it's enough to have us separated forever.

All Right The Beat, see you next time and hopefully you can come to the Youth Center so I can write some more. Love you lil' sis and big bro.

-Lil' Dirty

From The Beat: We're sorry you can't get all the pictures sent to you, but rules are rules. Hold tight to the ones they do allow, especially the family. We're working on getting to the youth center, but if you don't see us there keep writing and we'll keep publishing! Thanks again, this is a very good piece.

continued from previous page

with us as long as I can remember.

My mom and my uncle fight a lot so she kicks him out. Since we have no other family, he has to resort to the streets instead of a family member's place. When he lives on the streets, he has his drinking buddies. He drank Vodka every day. I would kick it with him often because I loved his company, and I wanted to show him that his nephew cares.

My uncle drank, passed out, woke up, drank, panhandled. I feel bad because my mom had no choice but to kick him out, and most of the time he went willingly, since my mom yelled a lot.

The more he drank he developed some problem. He started to bleed internally by his esophagus. Since he never had insurance, he never went to the doctor's.

I remember when I got out of juvenile hall. I was on house arrest and I went to bring my uncle home. See, the thing is, my uncle and I are close. I can't explain it, but it's like that one person who makes you smile, makes you happy, who truly understands and respects you. That's who my uncle was. I understand you know what I'm talking about.

So my uncle was there at my house for two days. I was trying to get him to quit drinking and he didn't. I made a bed for him by me and in the morning he woke up.

He was saying, "Justin! Justin!"

I got up hellla quick.

He said to get him a trash bag. I did. Then I saw blood on the carpet. I started to freak out, and he started to throw up chunks of blood into the bag. I called 911 and the ambulance came and took him to the hospital. They rubber banded something, and the doctors said, "If you drink you'll die."

He did not drink for a year and a half, but out of nowhere he felt healthy and started to drink inch by inch. He left again and I was on house arrest at the moment. I cut it (the monitor) off to bring him back.

I went and he told me, "Nephew, can I just be happy?"

I cried and cried and stayed with him on the streets for two weeks. I made a deal with him though. I said, "I'll turn myself in if you go home."

He said, "Ok."

I gave him hug after hug, and he gave me two tall cans and a pack of stoges. I then went to the bus stop to catch the 522 Rapid, and went to juvie on August 28, 2007.

My mom was writing me, and I had dreams of my uncle drowning. She told me he got locked up and they let him out three weeks later. I did two months and I got released October 28, 2007.

At that time, he was still on the streets, but I had no way to get him.

My little brother got out December 14, 2007, out of CYA, and a week later my uncle came home. We partied for a couple days 'til one morning.

On December 24, 2007 my uncle passed.

I woke up and my brother said, "Uncle Butch wanted a trash bag for some reason."

I said, "How long ago?"

He said, "Like 30 minutes."

I started to trip out and went in my mom's room. There he was lying on the ground. He looked up at me and said, "Nephew call the ambulance."

I started to panic and cry and I called 911.

I said, "Fght it Uncle Butch, please fight!"

There was hellla blood on my mom's carpet, and the paramedics came. Two minutes later my mom came home 'cause I called her too. The paramedics got my uncle and picked him up to the living room. While they took him there, he was having a seizure and blood started to roll down his

face. He was shaking so bad. My mom collapsed, while they were trying to resuscitate him as they gave him an adrenaline shot. The cops told us to go in the den. Then those disgusting animals searched us. I tried to pull back and the mutha had the nerve to say, "Do you wan to get physical?"

I said, "Screw you," and let him search me.

We went to the hospital and the doctor said he passed on. Me and my mom broke down. Like I told you, my family is really small. It consists of six people now.

It was six, but during this story my nephew was born December 19, 2006. So it was a new addition, then bam, my uncle is gone.

My mom went into depression mode. She lost her closest thing to her mom and her mom's side of the family. They grew up together, and death is striking once you experience it. Life was different from that moment on.

'Til this day, I still think of him every night. He was my uncle, my best friend, and my wisdom. RIP Uncle Butch 2-9-61 to 12-24-07. After that I didn't care any more.

It was six days after his death and my mom took off work and she was raunchy. She kept making coffee since she quit drinking and crying along the way. I stayed with her in mourning for three days straight, not once leaving her. We missed him so much.

So, basically, six months later, I got caught for a serious charge and I've been here for six months. When I get out, I want to be there for my family. It's going to take six years, but I will get out, so that is just a minimal chapter of my life.

I've been through so much shhh. I've been through hell and back. All I got to say is try and change and choose your choices wisely. Life is hard and it's hard to make it.

To all the people that read my piece and enjoyed on what I had to say, stay up. I see myself in ten years with a coo' job, a lady, and possibly a kid. Shhh, it feels good to look in the future. Mainly because I realize what's ahead of me. I'll still handle my shhh, but I'm not going to go look for trouble, and not do stupid shhh that led me in here. I want to be with my nephew and be some sort of figure to him. He is two, and when I get out he might be six or seven. I love children, and when I was out, I always played with my nephew. I watched him, changed his diapers, chased him down just to make him laugh.

So my philosophy is that you need three things in life to survive, and that's friends, love and family. I have friends and that keeps me company. They bring me that kind of happiness that a family member cannot. I haven't really experienced real love with a female yet, but I've had puppy love. And to the end, family is everything to me.

I regret that I yelled at my mom, dipped out for weeks at time and I disappointed my dad.

I'm about to end this story, so stay up to all the homegirls doing time and to the homeboys doing time. It's time for me to close, so remember to keep your head up, chest out, nose clean, and stand tall and always refuse to fall. From the max, late...

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There's something you left out of this remarkable tour de force, which is this: with all the playing, all the drinking, all the partying, all the being there for your mom and your uncle, all the running from the cops — where in the hell did you learn to write like this? Are you one of those cases we read about, a savant who never went to school but can write like a college graduate? Even while we are still wiping away the tears from what you've been through, from the terrible loss of your uncle and your freedom, we have to stand in awe of your story-telling abilities. There is not just one book in this brief "confession," but several... and you've only just begun! Do what you know you have to do, Chango, to return to the world of the living, and don't do what you know leads to the other world (like getting drunk...). You have so much to look forward to. Anyone who can turn this much pain into this much art can shape the world! Thank you!

My Nightmare

Playing jump rope

Chasing boys

Life seems so easy

Then came puberty

Failing grades

Stressful days

Getting influenced in bad ways

Losing faith, lost hopes

Trying to fix things by using dope

Dragging friends down with me

No one should have befriended me

I turned into the bad friend

Kept doing drugs again and again

Now every day gets harder and harder

Because I have become a nightmare.

-Jaymee, Fresno

From The Beat: At one point in most people's lives they have done something that has classified them too as a bad friend. Once you have recognized that you have too, all you can do is to be different to others from now on and ask for forgiveness, whether they can give it to you or not.

Obama-Obama We Are Free at Last

Obama-Obama, our first black president.

We made it we did it. Your journey was relevant.

You came a long way and believed you could.

You believed in pulling out of war I think you should.

Martin Luther King said I have a dream.

You are the dream, a black man just like Dr. King.

Help us that struggle that are trying to succeed,

Knock down some of those prisons so these kids can read.

Teach us the right way so we all can be smart.

Teach us how to march...

because we are free at last.

Teach us how to love with out running from our past.

We are all one nation we shall come together.

Every white girl and white boy is my sisters and brothers.

We should overcome in Dr. King's words.

We shall overcome words we all should have heard.

Yes we can Obama, yes we can.

No more am I called a boy because I am a man.

-Lil' Purp, Alameda

From The Beat: Beautiful, powerful words. YOU are Dr. King's dream too — if you step up and live it. A dream that you will be part of uplifting all people, wherever they are, whoever they are — starting with yourself. It's not just your 'hood, it's all of us: We all we got.

Good-Bye

I would like to say good-bye to all the bad influences in my life. Bad influences come in all shapes and sizes. While I am in here I am taking my time to sort these people out whether it is my friends or my family.

These people have done nothing but hold me back and I am tired of that. I want to start fresh and see if I can do better in life putting myself and my needs first.

I hope my decision is the right one because I am one month away from being eighteen and from here on out, my life is no joke.

-Skid, Solano

From The Beat: It sounds like you made the right decision. Goodbye and good riddance. You are right to realize how crucial it is not to get caught up in the adult system. Make your own life, independent from those who don't have your best interests in mind—whether friends or family. Then you can be free to create the circle of friends and family you need.

The Last Words

When you realize you're about to leave, a certain type of emotion races through your body. You feel compelled to stay, but you have to go, so you try to fill in as many words as you can. For example, when your parents are done visiting you, you mainly say, "I love you," and if it's your homies, you give them handshakes and props and tell them you'll catch them on the rebound.

So if I was bouncing for a coo'-ass minute and there is no possible way of communicating with them, then I would take off all the weight on my shoulders. I would go to my closest friends and homeboys and give them my respect and honors. There wouldn't be one person that I would just say bye to. I would say it to everyone that respects me and I respect them.

My final words would be... "Well homeboy/homegirl, I'm here to give my upmost respect, loyalty, and honor, but I have to depart for now. I do not know how long I'm going to be gone for, but we will see each other in the future. Since I've known you, you've watched over me somehow and if for some reason I pass wherever I go, I will watch you over in heaven. Time is of the essence and I loved the company you've shared with me and I have to leave, so stay up, stand tall and refuse to fall because there are so many conniving backstabbers that will cheat you to beat you. Just choose your friends wisely, so I'm out. Remember the words I've just said and take it to heart."

All in all, that's what I would say if it was my last words. Stay up to the homeboys doing time.

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is a testament to your strength as a writer, Chango, that when we read your farewell words, even knowing they are only for a "what if" question — a hypothetical — they still bring us near to tears! They are so full of your heart that they fill our heart. We hope wherever you are, wherever you go, you will never really say farewell to The Beat. You mean too much to us for that.

Lost For Words

Too many words to jot down. So little time.

So many things I want to say between theses parallel lines.

Today's Thursday. Same thing every day. Same things every night. There's so many people in the streets playin' games.

In my mind I feel like I'm by myself.

It's hard knowin' you goin' to do hard time at a young age.

Even in the system, it feels like there has been

A lot of young men gettin' sentenced to a decade or life.

It is a lot, but from the outside point-of-view

You seem like a small percentage.

That small percentage might be you.

Stay out. I ain't got nothin' to say. Late.

48 hours

60 seconds

365 days a year

One life

Keep it real.

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is hard for us to imagine you lost for words, Saetern. In so few words, you manage to express so much. Not just knowledge, but feeling, heart, soul. The same people that hand out hard time like candy would fight like hell if it were their children paying the price. How do we get them to see that you are their children? And, in reverse, there would be so much less violence if those committing it could see that those they are hurting could be their own brothers and sisters, their own fathers and mothers. How do we get them to see that? We need your wisdom, Saetern, whichever side of walls your find yourself on!

Numb

She has more regrets then y'all ever know
so she hides who she's been wherever she goes.
She pops, she snorts, she smokes, she drinks,
anything to get that high,
anything to just survive,
the pain she feels is just too deep
so she pops another to keep the tears from rolling down
her cheek.
She never went a day without worrying or tripping,
'till her first fix
then she knew she had to keep sniffing.
She never worries about it being her last,
she's just trying to forget the past.
With every sip she feels the pain slip away,
just trying to feel numb for at least one more day.
She's in her room drinking shots,
never tripping bout getting caught,
never tripping bout how much,
even when she's yacking up her lunch.
This daily routine never gets old,
she's just trying to make herself feel whole.

-Jordyn, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really incredible piece, thanks for sharing with The Beat. The experiences you describe are really common among drug and alcohol users. People often use to forget pain, to escape a painful reality for a short time. Unfortunately, drugs will only work for a short time, and they don't fix the problem, they just make you unaware of a problem that is still there. Using doesn't fix anything, only facing the source of pain will help.

Jail Life: A Whole Different Tomorrow

It's a whole different world in jail but I think Juvenile is just a Big Daycare until you get to the next level. But real jail like Rita or the pen-in Juvenile Hall the staff like to talk to you and give you lectures, when you get to the next level they're not going to even call you by your name they're going to call you by a number.
In Juvenile Hall you got 42 inch TV's watching free movies got game systems like PS2's and Nintendo Wiis and the staff bring their Xbox 360s in and different things. In the hall you can get a straight through phone call.
You get to the next level you have to use a collect phone. But it's different gangs own the phones so most likely you wont even be able to use the phone.
It's a lot of horrible things going on in the pen smuggling drugs, callin' hits, dudes getting they butt took and sold. It's just whole different life and world. It's crazy you don't know if you gone make it home--you can get killed or extra time.
I just don't know what tomorrow is going to bring--same thing for the outs but in Jail it's a whole different tomorrow.

What J.A.I.L. Means To Me
J = to get Juveniles
A = to get Adults
I = Incarcerated
L = 4 Life
So Jail means to me: Get Juveniles and Adults Incarcerated 4 Life

-Young Boobie, Alameda

From The Beat: Do you know if you are going on to Rita or the pen? Your comparisons make it very clear that the adult system is no joke, and no place someone would want to live. In the outside world it's true we never know what tomorrow is going to bring, but you can still do your best to make plans and set up the life you'd want to live. You may have a job and a family that may be interrupted at times by unexpected situations...good and bad, and you can't control it—but you can guide your life because what you do and who you are today pretty much creates what you do and who you are tomorrow, etc. Our point, yours included we hope, is that it's definitely best to stay out of jail.

Last Words

Well, what's good, Beat? This Young Bri. As you know, I'm getting sentenced to some time up in Colorado, so basically this is my last words to those who want to take my advice. I been around here in these streets for a long-ass time. I l thought I would never get caught up, doing the things that I was doing, such as selling drugs, robbing, stealing, etc. Now look at me.
So y'all whose first time in this hole, make sure this y'all last time, for real, because being in group homes and in places like this ain't cool. Being away from my family... it kills me when I see them walking out these doors and I can't go. That shhh hurt me. So please do the right thing. Go back to school, get a job and do you. Forget all those otha ninjas. They ain't going have ya back with you down. So do you, for real, my ninja, 'cause, man, these streets ain't like it used to be.

You really picking the way you live, and, trust me, I know you don't want to see your grave just yet. So do what you got to do. These ninjas who is your so-called goons going to turn on you in a blink of an eye. Prime example: look at my bro's (RIP CJ and RIP Darious)... Not saying that you them, but ninjas really is trying to gain control, all for nothing. So be smart, make wise choices, and don't lose your life to the system, for real. Learn from others' mistakes and make a change. We got a real chance now that we have a President that's fin to make changes in the states.

-Young Bri, San Francisco

From The Beat: All we can say, Young Bri, is that you always spit real knowledge that we can only hope even one young person will take to heart and learn from, without having to make the mistakes you've made to learn these hard lessons. We truly hope that these are not your last Beat words. You can write us from anywhere and at any time, and we know you will find a new experience, new people, new knowledge in Colorado, so we hope we can benefit through your written words. Our address is on page three of every Beat we do, so don't forget to write. Keep your head up, and good luck!

Illusion Of Perfection

This perfect little princess
No one sees her pain
the way she bottles it up inside
she'll most likely go insane
she has everything she could want.
There is nothing else she needs
How could she feel so unhappy
in this perfect life she leads?
She has all the material things
She can even get the guys
but she's searching for internal happiness
in the perfected life of lies
if people only knew
the thoughts that go through her head
maybe they'd reach out to this princess
before she ends up dead.
Luckily she's afraid of death
the thought of never awakening again
Hopefully this fear stays with her
So her life does not come to an end
everyone sees the small things
they don't make the connection
If they were to look at the big picture
They'd see its all an illusion of perfection

-Kathryn, Fresno

From The Beat: We have known many who seem well on the outside. They suppress their emotions and are never really honest with themselves and then they act out or break down. It doesn't have to be that way. All she needs to do is to heal. She can start by talking with someone she can trust. She can get help and address her issues. No one is perfect.

Me And My Family

The picture I would cherish most in my life would be a picture of me and my complete family.
My family now is absolutely never complete no more. My dad got locked up and now he's facing a five-year sentence. Me and my older brother are now locked up, and I don't know if we're going to be out any time soon. But even when me and my brother were out I was always stupid, and my brother was messing up a lot too. As a result, my three brothers are looking up to me, in a wrong path, and now they are beginning to look like they want to tack it too.
My mother has suffered so much 'cause of me and I really want to make it up to her. The picture I would cherish in my life the most that I want to keep until I die, would be a picture of my complete family, and we looked like we all loved each other.

-Jose, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That's a beautiful-sounding picture, and it sounds like you can actually make that a goal for yourself. As soon as you get out, work on showing your brothers a better path, so that they won't be locked up when your dad gets out. And as for yourself, start thinking about the best ways to make it up to your mom. That will keep you out of trouble, too.

Black Rain

Black rain, it haunts my dreams. Black rain,
It muffles my screams, black rain, it's the result
of all my pain, black rain, it's on the edge of
my brain. Black rain it's the cause of all your
Fears black rain, it's the thing that colors your tears.
Black rain, it's the switch from living to dead.
Black rain, it turns from clear to red,
Black rain, it's what will end it all
Black rain, it puts you back in the hall
Black rain, it falls it always calls.
Black rain, it keeps you on the edge of your mind.
Black rain, it never seizes to bind.
Black rain, it's the reason your lies sell.
Black rain, it's the chain that holds you to hell.

-Ace, Solano

From The Beat: This is an effective poem, scary and dark. What can clear this black rain Ace? What is strong enough to break this chain? It sounds like serious depression that darkens all light. If this is what happens in your head it would be good to have some help with it. Sometimes situations make us sad for a long time, very sad—and sometimes our brain chemistry is not balanced and we need help to get some light back in there. Please think seriously about what you need, we wouldn't want you to think your life has to be like this.

He Was Here And Now He's Gone

He was as bright as the sun
And had a smile like a clown
He walked around
Getting along with everybody.
Now he's off this earth
Looking down on everybody

Pla! Pla! Bullets into his body
They took his life like an animal
As if nobody cared because of a robbery
I was not there
To say the last few words
I had to spare.

-Arturo, Marin

From The Beat: Even though you wrote that "nobody cared," we can see that you cared, and that means a lot. We're sure he never thought that something like this could happen to him, and yet it did. We know you will never forget him, and we hope that this tragedy will lead you to see why taking chances with your life (even for money) is just not worth it. Some consequences are terrible and permanent. We're sorry.

How I Feel!

Man I feel really violent 'cause I am mad at someone who has hurt me really bad.
She thinks it's OK and she's still out there doin the same thang. And my step dad too. Both of y'all gone pay fo' what y'all did to me.
I couldn't control him, you know I couldn't he's stronger than me! And you sat there and let him do that to me for a whole week straight, and I couldn't do nothing.
I tried fighting , it didn't work. I ran from you and you still found me. It's like I can't escape from you! But now I don't care because you are not going to hurt me any more.
You're just mad 'cause my daddy don't want yo' sorry ass no more and you tryin' to treat me wrong to get back at him. Well guess what you ain't gon' hurt me or my daddy no more and now I've been free -- 'cause you thought you could threaten my life and try to shoot at me for me not to tell my daddy.

Hell no I told him, and you ain't gonna never get to me no more.
And you is wrong about me never going to be nothing 'cause I am going to go to college and become that doctor I want to become 'cause I got the smarts for it and you are not going to put me down or make me feel bad 'cause I know who I am, an I got all my family who got my back 100% so you go on... keep doin what you do 'cause me I am too .
But you will never hurt me again an' I bet my life on that.

-Ericka, Alameda

From The Beat: It's good to see you speak up with so much power, and let that self-respect guide you to say that NO you will not accept to be abused anymore. And yes – you can be whatever you want, never listen to anyone who would put you down... so now, after writing this strong, angry piece, tell us what you plan to do to prove them wrong and prove yourself RIGHT!

Dear Obama

First off, congratulations in the inauguration. Also, for being 44th President in the United States.
Well, I just wanted to say that I'm glad that society has changed into a better community, and with your help we'll make it even better. And when you said "For the world has changed, and we must change with it," I agreed with you, because like you said, everywhere we look there's change to be made.
One way to really help out the community is by helping those that want to be helped. By giving them jobs it gives those in need something to look forward to. Also, those that have been here for years and need more economic help - immigrants with a good future - need that kind of help. Those good souls need more education and those without education need it, and you can do this by putting more money in all of educational related things, rather than in prisons. It's because of that that people are in prisons. It's because of that that kids and others think that they are not cared for in government eyes. They do more crime to put themselves in the government eyes.
My ideas are to help out the community and myself and government as well. Well, thank you President Obama for taking this time to read what I have to say. Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
One of your citizens.

-Adriana, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks Adriana. We'll send this to The White House, which is where the president gets to live while he (and one day, she) is in office.

Put an end to Violence

People around the world are using violence against one another. Violence is happening over money, food, land, oil, gangs, and drugs. People say violence is human nature, some say not; I say violence needs to end.

Violence is a big part of African American communities. People are getting shot, stabbed, robbed, raped; fights, alcoholism, and drug abuse.

America has caused so much violence in Iraq. Bush said America was going over to Iraq to get Osama Bin Laden. That was part of it; the other part of it was going over to get that oil that's over there and not caring about those innocent bystanders that are in the streets getting shot at by American soldiers.

Some people may not realize what this country has done to another, and that was bring so much violence into another part of the world.

I'm going to talk about the government for a minute. The government is slowly dismantling the constitution; it may not seem like it, but it's happening. They say the FBI doesn't need evidence to get a search warrant on a person, all they have to do is go to the courts, have a judge sign it, and it's valid to search that person or that person's place of residency; that's violating our Civil Rights. I think the government knew about everything before it happened; that means I think they knew about the Twin Towers and Katrina.

Now back to violence. I'm not saying don't use violence peacefully; make it peaceful violence. Speak with your mouth instead of your fist and weapons. Fine, express how you feel, but with words that are the most powerful violence there is. And when I mean peaceful words, it doesn't have to be bad language.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke with very powerful words, and now we are sitting, eating, and drinking from the same water fountains, sitting at the same tables, and eating at the same restaurants and hanging around whites, blacks, Asians, Mexicans, Indian, and all types of people because of nonviolence, and we need to continue that act.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream, on January 20, 2009 that dream came true. We now have to change as African American people. We have to stop giving ourselves a bad reputation, not just African Americans, but all people of all races. We now have an African American president in the White House; I know things are going to change big.

This world wasn't made for people to kill, rape, steal, and rob from one another. This world has turned into something. It's not violence. The government has turned America into something; it's not the police who are shooting people for no reason, beating people for no reason. The violence has to stop, and it has to stop now. If violence continues in the world, nothing good will happen. We need to end it now.

I think Barack Obama is going to have a good impact on America; hopefully we can go over to Iraq and apologize for what we have done.

Hopefully we can move forward with things, and make a dream that all violence will end and not worry about people committing crimes. That change has to come and I believe it will.

-Andre, Alameda

From The Beat: A lot of people share your anger over the violence that is becoming more and more apparent within our country. Are there things you think you can do to help end violence on a small scale in your community? Is there a friend or relative you think you can talk out of using violence just one time? Every little bit helps, and spreading wisdom like you can be contagious. Once it starts, it ripples out to more and more people. Start the ripple!

Don't Matter

It's doesn't matter the seven months I've already done They're giving me four more and they haven't even begun I look at myself and hate the reflection Of all the hard work and endless dedication I was hustlen, makin it in the streets And all it tool was time a little belief But since I'm young it was taken from me Everything I worked so hard to be Now I'm in a cell like an animal They're eating me alive worse then a cannibal They say they helping me when they really don't have to When I see my mama cry it really don't faze me Must be why people call me so crazy She didn't cry for me when I had bloody eyes Or when I rolled the dice and threw away my life... So why should it matter if these handcuffs are on I'm just another Teen gone wrong

-Magill, Solano

From The Beat: If you hate your own reflection that's why it matters that the handcuffs are on. This is your chance to STOP and turn with your life, into a life where you don't feel like an animal in a cage, and don't hate yourself. Your Mama, we're sure, doesn't know the whole story. If you worked as hard on your legit life as you did hustlin' surely you can make something of it.

A Little About Me

Hey Beat, what's up? I don't know what to write so I'm gonna tell you about my life from ages 11-14.

You see, when I was two I got taken away from my mom and put into state care. I got taken away from my mom because my mom basically raped me from the age 3 and up. I went from group home to group home until I drew the line by burning down a school.

I write this because I want you guys to know that one person can mess up your whole life.

-Stacks, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for deciding to share this with us. Tell us about the new you and what your dreams and hopes are for the next chapter in your "new" life! We have faith in you!

Words Of Life

Tired of being in here, might not get out to see my baby born. They tryna give me a year in Fouts but Ima deny it and do more time till I'm 18.

My birthday coming up real soon in February and I don't want to spend my birthday in here. I want to get out and spend time with my family, try and go down the right path cause I don't want to get locked back up.

I think I'm having a boy, and I need to be out to raise him, cause a woman can't raise a man. Since my father's not in my life I'm not trying to be out of my baby's life. My baby's born in four more months. The system trying to hold me down, keep me locked up because of my history, my past.

I'm about to be 18 now and I'm looking at shhh differently and the system not seeing what I'm seeing. So I would like to get out, get a job, go to college, graduate and have a good income to pay the bills. The only thing in my way is being locked up.

-William, Solano

From The Beat: How is school going? It's a good first step to finish school and graduate. It will help your son or daughter if you go to college. When you have a kid you have to look at the big picture, long term. If you have a history, how will you change your patterns of how you deal with things, like being broke, or angry or both? Your kid will need a father, you need to become one. Good luck, and start now!

Fighting For My Soul

They say demons live in the shadows of my life waitin' for a chance to show themselves. If there was ever a time I didn't truly believe in God, that time has passed because if there can be something so evil, why not good? Why is it so easy to go down and it takes the world to bring one person up? That may be the reason why I doubt a God.

Is my life supposed to be this way? I promise to never give up, to keep fighting for my soul, that piece of mind. I know in reality I'm not, but sometimes I feel like I'm the only one to suffer.

I realized a long time ago that there is much more to life, much more to me than I give credit for knowing, that I love where I'm at — not physically, but mentally. Sometimes I wish I could start over, that the life I'm living is just a long dream and I would wake up any moment. I just hope I grow old. I know demons don't stay in the shadows forever.

-Pinky And The Brain, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's no wonder you were so upset when you thought we did not publish this amazing piece! To be honest (and we hope this doesn't mark us as "weak"), when we read this, our eyes filled with tears. We wish we had written the wonderful line: "there is much more to life, much more to me than I give myself credit for knowing..." Good and evil, these are the themes of some of the greatest literature ever written, and who knows, Mr. Pinky and the Brain, you may be someone we remember as contributing to that literature as your mind expands and your life is enriched. It's as if we see it happening before our very eyes. We are so proud of you for writing this!

I never got the opportunity to have "Mommy" or "Daddy" ask me, "Baby, what do you want for Christmas?"

Facing Reality

I'm sixteen years old and all my life I've been facing reality. Growing up, I grew up with all the white kids in my city. They got everything they wanted, plus more, but what they didn't know about me is I'm a dope baby. I was born addicted to meth. They didn't know that, did they? They think life was hard because mommy or daddy didn't get them the new Ipod or digital camera, and all of a sudden their lives are ruined. All my life I struggled from selling drugs to selling my body to put food on the table for my older siblings and mother. I was smoking dope in the bathroom with my mama at twelve years old.

I never got the opportunity to have "Mommy" or "Daddy" ask me, "Baby, what do you want for Christmas?" My Christmas Eve was helping Mommy in the hospital bed, 'cause Daddy decided to beat her to her deathbed. Ha! Talk about "Merry Christmas"...

So for me... I'm facing reality.

-Anonymous, San Francisco

From The Beat: You don't need to compare the degree of your pain to that of anyone else for us to know that what you have endured is something no human being, and certainly no child, should ever have to endure. You put us in mind of something Abraham Lincoln said near the end of the terrible Civil War. He said, "The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation." Don't give in to this terrible past, but rise above it. Let your fiery past shine a bright light of honor on your future, by climbing from the hole that you had nothing to do with digging, and by helping other young people to deal with the kind of trauma your strength as allowed you to survive.



If you hadn't brought me around your selfish lifestyle that you lived I probably would look at life a little differently.

What's on My Mind

If you were here I think that I wouldn't be in the situation that I am in now. If you were around more I probably would be being a child instead of tryin' to be grown. If you were in my life everyday from the gate I wouldn't look up to strong men or any man or boy for love. If you didn't leave my mom in heartbreak she wouldn't blame me for your mistakes as a man and a father. If you hadn't brought me around your selfish lifestyle that you lived I probably would look at life a little differently.

Dad, not that I blame you, but you put a very big dent in my heart and life and because of it I became a prostitute in these streets choosing the wrong men for my life because I wouldn't know what a real one was cause you wasn't and making my mother because of it. All I ever wanted was for you to be there and now I have to suffer because you're not. Why?

-Ladi, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really heartfelt piece, we're sorry you had to go through life without a positive male role model. Reading this though, we get a sense that you know who you are, and you also know what you want to become (and what you don't want to become too). Be proud of that.

Running My Mama

My mama told me while I run these streets She can't sleep, her phone rings late at night She thinks something will happen to her nerves So bad right now she can't watch T.V she Turns every time she sees the police she Scared to look 'cause it might be in the Back. Every time she hears about a shooting her Heart skips a beat, she heard the feds were In town, her knees got weak. When she knows I'm at the house is the only time she's at peace. I'm golden to these streets ,but to mama I'm Still her baby, raise a man all by yourself, you a Hell of a lady, shhh killing me to know I'm running My mama crazy. I think I'm speaking for every Street ninja around I don't think we Sit down long enough sometime to realize What we putting are momma Through. It hurts me to know dog that I'm running my mama crazy and it's really Killing me to know that I'm helping to Kill my momma.

-Lil' Sani, Alameda

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this excellent piece about what your mama goes through. The question is, what are you prepared to do, so that you can stop hurting your mother and make her proud?

Smile

Sometimes life seems hard and difficult, as if you don't want to carry on. Life sometimes may feel unfair as if the whole world is against you. Even if it seems as if you're going against a whole army, you always have to try to keep a sense of humor.

Through thick or thin, rain or snow you should always remain positive and smile through all the bull shhhh. Life ain't easy, but you can't give up.

If you fall down, stand back up and try twice as hard. Always learn from your mistakes and spread your wings, fly through all the thunderstorms and look for the sun. The power of a smile can be very powerful.

At the end of each journey lie new opportunities. The adventures never end. Aim to be the best, settle for nothing less.

So remember any situations you may be in. Keep your sense of humor and laughter. A smile can make the most difficult situations bearable.

So smile, there will always be brighter days.

-Nguyen, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What an inspirational piece, Nguyen! Everyone can take this and apply it to his/her own life. We appreciate you sharing this with the readers. What inspired you to write this? Is this something you apply to your own rules of living?



I barely hang out with my family. I'm always out with my friends. Now that picture is like it was only me in it.

The Picture Of Me and My Family

Well today I'm going to talk about my special picture that I was in. It was a picture of me my two brothers, my mom, and my dad. Now we're all happy. In this picture we were all a happy family, but now it seems like we are not that kind of family no more.

We barely hang out like a family but now my dad is gone. I don't hang out with him that much no more. I don't even know where he is. My middle brother is never home that much so I barely hang out with him. But now I barely be home. I barely hang out with my family. I'm always out with my friends. Now that picture is like it was only me in it.

-Lil' Shadow, Alameda

From The Beat: We're sorry, and we can only imagine how you feel. But you know what life is like that. It is what you make of it. Even though your dad is gone, you still have your mom, and your brother. And if you really miss being a family together you should just flat out tell them. Tell your mom and your brother that you want to hang out together like a family. It's up to you to make it happen. And it's better late than ever. Life is short and each day that passes by that you don't spend with your family is just one more day that you ain't never getting back.

I Love You, Truly I Do

If I was going to go away for a while, the last words I would want to tell my lady, wife, Baby's mama (she's all in one),,, but what I would tell her is, "Happy anniversary, and I got a little poem I wrote to you. Listen to my words. They're real and from your husband's heart. Listen: I love you, truly I do

You're my everything, forever me and you

Cherishing every moment created among us two

No girl could take the position in my heart I have for you

Elissa, I look deep within your eyes, that directly to your heart

I know the pain you've been through, each and every part

No need to try and hide it, I'm here forever since the start

You're my first love, death can't even do us apart

God blessed us two you with me, me with you

So Love, tell me, but be 100% true

Do you love me like I love you? If so then take my hand

Let's make it last forever in lover's land -

I love you, stay true forever, promise me...

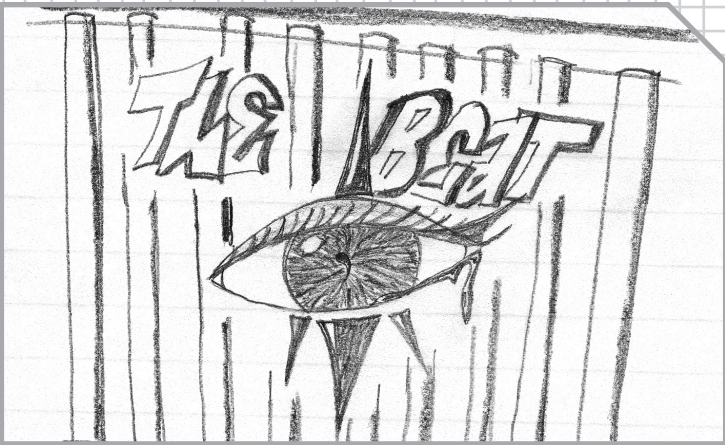
I hope you like it it's from my heart.

I can't wait to see you."

All who read this, I'm loyal to my girl. No girl will take me from her. That's on. So if you want to talk, do your talking. It's nothing. And to all who feel me, stay true to your ladies and get it in return.

-Peanutt, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We seldom designate love poems as pieces of the week, but then again, we seldom see love poems like this — beautiful, passionate, even fierce and powerful. One of the things that makes this such a fine poem is that you not only are so very lucky to have found this degree of love so early in your life, but that you know how lucky you are and will do nothing to risk losing it.



Lost Innocence

What's up Beat, I have this picture in my cell, and this picture is the most valuable picture I have because this is a picture of me and my three brothers.

The reason why it's so valuable is that in this picture we are no more than four kids filled with innocence. And it's funny how I can take a picture now and we almost look like four different people because we no longer have any innocence in us.

I enjoy to just look at the picture and remember those times before I even had a thought to break the law and end up in juvenile, and it motivates me to be a little more like that again.

-Jairo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There is still time to get your life and your brothers lives together, Jairo. Your innocence might be gone but the happiness that life brings is still available for you and your brothers! You don't have to break the law, or do things that'll get you in trouble. These are the choices that you made and you don't have to keep going this way if you don't want to.

These Thoughts

There is so much rage in the back of my heart. It's like I can't even think right no more. I can't even move. I don't wanna move. I could make the wrong one. I'm sitting in a cell. As lucky as I am. I know. I'm supposed to be dead. My back aches. My heart hurts. My head feels. Like shhh. And I'm supposed to be good? That's what counselors say. But as privileged as I seem. I don't feel equivalent to human. I feel like their pet. Being told when to eat. Being told when to sleep. Is that a human? And the looks I get from inmates. Makes me want to swing my hands furiously. 'Till I can't feel my hands no more. It seems like the right thing to do. It's Kraz-e.

-Kraz-e, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is such a raw and personal piece, thank you for sharing it with us. Although it's hard to keep your head up in a place like the hall, it's necessary if you want to survive your stay mentally. We know you can do it, your mind is a strong tool! Use it instead of your fists, in the end you'll benefit greatly.

Don't Judge Me

I ain't really feeling the topic so I'm going to write about how there are people out there that judge others by their actions. Such as judges, PO.'s, counselors, teachers, etc...

All these people know about us is what is written on paper, what they read only. From then on they put some sort of picture and ideas in their heads about some of us just because of the actions and mistakes we did. They say a person is judged by their actions but I do not agree, for example, me. Yes, I have done a lot of messed up shhhh in my past but that does not mean I'm a drug addict, a criminal, or the worst son.

Deep down inside there is good in every single one of us. We just made mistakes like if judges, cops and/or PO's haven't. For some reason they feel too superior to us. I don't know if that will ever change. Hopefully it does.

-Payaso, Alameda

From The Beat: We agree, you shouldn't judge anyone by his or her appearance, but this seems to be a hard habit for many to break...what do you do when you meet someone for the first time? How do you hold back from wrongfully labeling them? As for there being more to you than the written paper the system reads, that's why The Beat was born, to give you that chance to paint another picture as to who is inside these institutions. Nice work.

Last Words

If I spoke to my dad on the phone right now, the last words would be, "dad I miss you. Come back."

-Francisco, Alameda

From The Beat: As sad as these last words are we recognize that they are very true. It takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there and expressing sadness for your dad never coming back. So we would like to commend you on that.

My Opinion

What's up, Beat? I'm not feeling the topic tonight so I'm just going to write about what's on my mind.

I got locked up last week. It sucks. All I want to do is go home. I know that can't happen at the moment so I just have to deal with it. I don't really want to but I'm going to stay strong and tough it out. I know I'm here for a reason and I'm happy I got locked up.

I've realized that I need help with my drug problem. My PO is going to send me to a group home that is going to help me. I know I don't want to continue going down the same path I have been. I want to turn my life around and be a working member of today's society. That's one goal that I have for myself. I'm going to do it!

There's hella haters out there that don't think I'm gonna do it. All I can say to them is that you will see. I bet you guys have heard the same shhh from other peeps. I got court on the eleventh of next month. Damn, I hope I get out and start working on myself.

This place is crazy! All these damn dogs up in here that don't got any respect for anyone but members of their gangs. Damn, it pisses me off. All these fools that think they're the shhhh. All I can say to them is you ain't shhhh and if you keep with those gangs you just going to end up dead. I don't give a shhhh what you got to say to me. I don't give a damn about you gang members or how big you think you are. I ain't talking shhhh but I'm just saying how I feel.

Everyone has the right to their own opinion and that's what I love most about The Beat. You can say what you want without having to worry. Thanks Beat for all your support. I'm gonna keep my head up and keep living life to the fullest. Peace out Beat!

-James, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This was a great, very opinionated piece, James. We're so happy that you were able to freely express your feelings in this letter. Why do you think it's so hard for some of the guys that are locked up to give respect to everyone? You might as well be respectful to the guys you're going to be seeing everyday for the rest of the time you're locked up. Although this was a great opinionated piece why don't you dish out some advice for The Beat readers instead? Tell us what you do to keep patient instead of going off when you become angry!

Freedom To Graduate

I just talked to my brother on the phone. I'm just here in Challenge and I'm doing good. I'm probably going to get out two weeks early and my other friend went to Fouts.

I'm waiting to get out and get my car back, it's a Pontiac Buick and put a system in it and go wherever I want. In summer I'll go to the beach, Lake Berryessa, have a barbeque.

If jobs get good by the time I get out I'll get one while I'm going to school. I'm a trying to do home school and I'm gonna catch up on my credits here too. I'm gonna go to summer school-and then I'll take the tests to graduate, and that's it.

-J, Solano

From The Beat: Keep your focus and finish school! You sound like you have some good places to go, and a cool car. What kind of job would you look for?

I'll Always Luv My Momma

I'll always luv my momma
Cause she's the only one who puts up with my drama
So I'll always love my momma
Remembering the days when I was a little kid
My mom never thought I would do the things I did
Smoking weed in the streets, fighting in school
In my mama's eyes, I was a fool
Chilling with the homies, straight raising hell
I'd never thought I'd end up in a juvenile cell
Even though I'm in a jail cell I know she's
Right there standing by my side
Even though I was a fool in my momma's eyes
Please momma don't stress, I know you only
Want the best for your son, please believe
That I'm sorry for what I've done
That's why I love you and I'm gonna settle down
I'm gonna make you the proudest momma in town
I'm so proud to be your son
Cause you're the only one who puts up with my drama
So I'll always love you momma.

-Zuly, Fresno

From The Beat: Zuly, make sure your mom gets a copy of this poem. It's a powerful, heartfelt gift from you, her son, and any mother would treasure that. You're so lucky to have mother who will stand by your side no matter what happens. Now that you've written your appreciation for her, give it to her. We hope these words you've written will start you on a path toward healing and becoming a better person so your mom won't have to stress anymore.

What I learned In My Life

I see the light an when I see the light it makes me think twice about my life, of people I hurt and did wrong in the past, an for the relationships that I had. For all the people who cared about me and loved me I'm sorry I did you wrong.

Now that I am about to leave there is something everybody in this room should know whatever staff mental health tells you do it because it's for your best interest to do so, why? Because they have been through things we did an seen or experienced even more.

Since I turned 18 I realized something, people in life is not going to give you anything because you have to earn it-nor they going to go out they way to help you unless want to be help an want to stop committing crimes cause at the end the only person your hurting is yourself and your loved ones.

-Cash Money, Solano

From The Beat: We wish you luck with everything, and hope you don't forget what you've learned.

Hold On

What's up Beat? How ya doin'? Me, keeping my head up always. I haven't been trippin' much anymore. Actually my sister moved in with her man, ex-gangbanger. He abuses her mostly. He said he supposedly stopped, but I don't know. I just leave it in God's hand and let my days go on.

But there is one thing that I'm trippin' about; it's my other sister. She's been hating cops ever since I got locked up, and she says she been drinking a lot to keep the pain away. It's more different because I can't stop her. I just trip 'cause she might never, you know, and I don't know what to do. I just gotta get out to protect them now.

I'm still working toward my future to get a perfect job, house, and beautiful wife, ya know. I'm just hoping court always goes by great or perfect, just never want anything bad to happen. I'm having faith that I'm getting out soon, a new life when I get out. Just never say never... but I will never give up for my life.

-Moe Joe, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We can see how worried you are about your sister, and we hope she is able to handle her anger without drowning her pain in alcohol. You might want to tell her that when people start getting addicted to alcohol, they start looking for reasons to drink, and you would hate to be just an excuse for her to get drunk! We believe that there is no problem that alcohol won't make worse! Hope you get out very soon and are able to achieve your dream of a new life, and be able to give your family the help they need. Good luck.

Last Words

If one day I was to leave and I was to talk to someone, I would talk to my mom because I love her. I would tell her that she has been a good mom, and that she has thought me a lot. Because of her and what she told me, I got out of a lot of trouble.

No matter where I go, I will always remember her, and all her words that she told me — especially when she tells me that she loves me. And I know I love HER very much, maybe more than I love myself.

-Lw, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a very nice piece expressing love for your mom. You don't have to love her more than you love yourself. Love is not limited; you can love her and yourself equally. (We couldn't read your name; take a little more time to spell it out.)

Hustling to Get Free

On the streets you were my boy
but a master of deceit. The only one I trusted
late night on the creep. Now that I'm in a cell
I can smell My minds weak
With out me Another five in a half
With out my lean to let me sleep
I'm hungry for meat
Tryna back at any ninja surrounding me
Hustling to get free. Stuck in a locked down facility
Reaching for my peace in my sleep
Back to back in my cell
Like I gotta semi auto pointing at me
It's finna be a tragedy when
I'm done with this word
Like rain drops on my sleeve
I got Jesus on my peace
Squeezing tightly till you're on your knees
With hell beneath and Heaven above
which is it gonna be.

-Ali, Solano

From The Beat: We wonder how you think this question will be answered. Do you think the answer will be clear, and then you'll never have to ask or answer it again? Or is it something you will have to re-visit, and re-commit to?

I'm Ready For Change

Maybe if my pops would have stayed and made it
Maybe then I wouldn't be incarcerated
With my house raided more than three times a week
They tryin so hard to get me off the streets
So they put me in a Failed system
And I don't need it,
I just need someone who'll Listen
Realize that I do have hope
To succeed in life without sellin dope.
I've seen too many fail, I must proceed
Show myself I can succeed
I'm tired of all this negativity
Usually coming from my bad mentality
It's not my fault, I was raised this way
So why am I the one that has to pay?
Don't tell me, I know why
For out my mouth came that lie

-Walnut, Solano

From The Beat: We think that what you are saying sounds like the truth, so we are left wondering what was the lie? The most important person to listen to you is yourself! You will find people who will see who you really are, but find them as a free man. Feed the positive side of yourself, grow it, develop it, get to know it, honor it, become it!!

I Miss

I miss my mom
Love and cherishable
I miss my house
A place where I can relax
I miss my dad
Putting knowledge in my head
I miss my girl
Crying 'cause I'm in jail
I miss my brother
Funny and bringing me up
When I'm down
Least but not last
I miss the outside world
Breathing fresh air and eating
Foods that have seasonings

-Taje, Fresno

From The Beat: We feel you - but the good news is that soon you will be free, and you will be able to appreciate all the things you have even better because you lost them for a little while.

Not The Last Words

These are not my last words
But it just keeps on getting worse
Feeling the young homies start with drugs
Having babies and leaving their girls

As time goes by I see more and more
And the bm's walk all alone, for the dad was far way gone
And that's hella stinking wrong.

You should think twice
Before you make the choice
Think, homie, you still hella young
Lil' homie you only a young teen, and what's the cost
Lil' homie you is no boy, to me you just a boy who's lost
Think wisely, for you only live once
Live your life

-Lovelle, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though we had to change some of the numbers you used into other rhymes, your advice is excellent, as always. We only hope that your grown-up words will not fall on children's deaf ears.

Being in a Gang

Being in a gang is something real, not a game, not a toy but life. Where there's no trust and no way out but people still choose to be in one. There are all kinds of gangs. All of them have different rules but see, I'm in a gang where you choose to what you want, where there are no rules. I still remember when I got put in.

Now, I'm a whole different person, fighting with people. I don't even know but for my hood. I do it. Now the only thing I stand for is my hood. No one could tell me what to do or when to do it. I got my homies backs to the fullest and for a fact I know they got mine. I grew up with them, learning little by little how to live a life of banging. I've accepted the fact that representing my hood is either gonna get me in jail or in the cemetery. It stays on my mind more then life itself.

Also on my mind all the time is fighting, rivalries, expecting rivalries, and killing rivalries. Also retaliation is a must. Putting in work is all I know but now that I'm doing time. I look back at the past and that's al what's on my mind is the hood and the gang. People who don't know should know what the life of being in a gang is about.

-Mango, Fresno

From The Beat: We agree that people must lead their own life and not follow the lead or directions of others. Realize who you are and what you are here to do in life. It is not to gangbang. Do not be afraid to break away and follow your own lead.

Having Faith

What up Beat! Tonight I'm going to talk about having faith. I wanna talk about having faith because tomorrow is my court date an' I might be getting' released tomorrow so that's why I'm having faith.

I have faith because I'm not the type of person to just give up on things. I like to stand my guard an' think positive about everything I do in whatever's gonna happen. I also have faith because I got a family at home wanting me to come home. I also have faith because of my lil' brother and my niece an' nephew. I also have faith 'cause I made a promise to my grandma (Rest In Peace) that I will always have faith and never give up.

-Young Chop, Fresno

From The Beat: We hope that even if you didn't get out when you hoped to, you will remember your promise to your grandma and hold onto your faith. Faith is about believing in yourself and in your tomorrow. Keep that alive, and your better tomorrow will come, even if it come later than you wish for.

Life Did Suck

Life did suck. Well, at least I can say. I use to think my life was horrible until I realized I made it all the way. I went from a bad teen to the worst teen, from selling drugs and robbing stores to selling my body and doing more. I was eleven when this all happened and I blamed everyone for it until I realized it wasn't no on else's fault but my own. Now it has been six years just for me to realize that it was my fault for the reason why my life sucked but now I'm seventeen and I'm a classy teen.

Well actually I have a mind of a twenty-three year old and it was me that chose to change my life but it did take six years for me to open my eyes. So now I stop all of this and moved back with my family and I was the one who turned myself in because I was the one who thought my life did suck!

-Veronica, Fresno

From The Beat: We admire the courage with which you face your life and the willingness to accept responsibility for your life. We wish you strength and conviction of spirit as you make these changes. Don't slip back. Ask for help and make a great new life. Good luck and God bless.

I Miss Vallejo

I'm tired of being locked up I'm trying to get out and get back to Vallejo, I need to get back to the lab so I can spit some verses I been writing in my room. I don't like being in Fairfield because it remind me of the hall, when I get to my city I feel it's not gon be the same.

I feel like I been locked up for too long, well while I'm in here I might as well get some rest and chill. Well I got to get my life together while I'm in here too. I got to learn from my mistakes. I miss my dogs man, I miss how we take care of each other and I miss my wifey. She is the main one that keeps me out of trouble and we take care of each other. All I'm sayin' is that I miss Vallejo.

-Ray, Solano
From The Beat: What do you learn from your mistakes Ray? We'd like to hear some verses that speak the truth about that. We are happy to hear that your relationships mean so much to you, and hope you put your energy into friends that have your best interest in mind, and support you in truly good ways. We like the way you're trying to get something good out of your time.

Last Words

Dear Twin,

You and me both know that you're the most important person in my life. I'm truly sorry I left without saying good-bye. I would have called if I wasn't so selfish. I think the least I could have did was told you where I was headed, knowing in my heart you're the only one I can truly trust. What we got is the best friendship I've ever had.

We're sixteen years old now. Seems like life was so much easier when we were growing up together, playing with "my size Barbies." I know we've grown up, but I hope we never grow apart.

Please forgive me for my own selfish feelings. I truly do apologize... Not only are you my best friend, but my sister. It's crazy how you think what I think, you feel what I feel. When I cry, you cry. When I'm sick, you're sick. That's sick!

When I'm gone away, no matter how far, our connection is still the same. You know when I'm in pain, 'cause you feel it, too. Twin, I never got to tell you I love you and I know it was wrong to just leave you alone. Now that I sit in this room, all I can tell you is, I'll be back soon.

Love you, Twin

-Raynete, San Francisco
From The Beat: This is a beautiful letter to your twin sister, Raynete... but these are not "last words." You will have many more words together, and many more experiences to celebrate and laugh about. Do what you have to do now, and get as much positive as you can out of the situation you find yourself in. That way, when you return, you will be better prepared to remain free and reconnect to your other half. We hope you show this to her. We know she will want to read it.

I Tried

I would tell my grandmother that I tried, although I didn't succeed to her expectations I am great as time has allowed me to be and now choose to live through the streets.

When you told me, my mom would curse me saying I would be just like my dad, I already have.

True and sad I choose that path, but couldn't escape if I got on my knees and asked. I still look over my sister and brothers and it's still two fingers to the others. We now have a president that's colored wish you could of seen it I really mean it.

-Mont, Alameda
From The Beat: We hear that you miss and respect your grandmother in your words. How might she suggest you escape the path you choose? Does Obama inspire you?

Decisions

Everyone has to make decisions for themselves. Sometimes the decisions you make can get you into big trouble. I made a decision that got me in trouble, and I regret it, not just for me, but for all the people it affected. What I did changed my life, and of my family and all that were affected. Now I put myself in a situation where the courts will make a decision for me.

-White Ninja, San Francisco
From The Beat: Living with the consequences of our acts — including how they affect those we love — can be a very hard thing to do, but it has taught you a very important lesson. Look forward, not back, and realize that some people never learn what you now understand. Put that newfound maturity to your advantage, and this will be an episode that will only make you stronger.

No Good

I was raised in a rough neighborhood up to no good I'm looking at the older foo's in my 'hood I wanna walk like 'em I wanna talk like 'em I wanna be a lil' G and hold a gun like 'em I wear my dickies creased I wanna smoke some meth out of the pipe And big homie up a block got a fat money roll and a firme 64 So I guess its me against the world I'm only 17 and I'm raising up a baby boy And I'm inducted in a hall of crime 'Cause they jumped my ass in '06 Now how you gonna tell me that I should get a job Dirty money spends easy so I'd rather rob you fool But that's how it goes in the barrio And momma used to say that I was no damn good

I knock on the door about six in the morning "Where the hell you been? Now it's the crack of dawn." I've been kicking it with the homies from the neighborhood But she knows I was out with some lil' beeziess It's like that song "It's a thin line..." She starving for attention cause it's been a long time And when I came home, I smell like a woman There's lipstick on my collar A phone number on the dollar But that's just me And just last week she found a hotel key Now every single time She be hitting star 69 Not knowing who she might find on the other line Will it be my homey Or will it be my jaina Will she come home early and find me Doin' my thing like she knows I could My woman used to tell me I was no damn good

Esta pelada con las jainas (these worthless girls) out there today So truchas (beware) with them 'cause you never know what they would do just to be with you. Well camaradas, that's it for this homie till next time. Alrato.

-Temper, Santa Clara
From The Beat: You know what we find the most tragic line in this long poem, Temper? It' the one that says: "I'm only 17 and I'm raising up a baby boy," and the tragedy is that you're only 17 and you're NOT raising up a baby boy. Without you there to raise him up, who will? Was your father there to raise you up? It makes us so sad to think of where you are and why, and where he is and why. We're sorry that anyone ever told you that "you're no damn good," or that you take some pride in that label. Will your child be "no damn good" if he grows up just like you? Of course not! He will always have in him the beauty that is there today, just as you do. Find it! Embrace it!

Losing a Friend

Losing a friend can be hard As to winning a cardsharp in a game of cards Losing a friend can be painful As to breaking a bone on the blacktop Losing a friend in battle can't be brought back As to gangsters stabbing each other in the back Losing a friend after such a short time I would not have traded fame and fortune for that time Losing a friend can never be good As to the teeth in George Washington's mouth made of wood The last days we spent together it felt like you knew The way I felt I almost knew The high I felt we spent that last day together No drug could give you Awakening and hearing you were no longer here It went in one side and came out the other ear The feeling I felt I've never felt again Than those of the meaning When you lose a friend

-Robert, Alameda
From The Beat: This is a really thoughtful piece. You give the readers a really good idea of what it's like to lose someone you care about. But if losing a friend gives us anything good, it's that it helps us remember how important they were to us.

My Future

The only thing I have been thinking about is my future. What I might be. What I might do. A part of my future is being drug free. I see my skin, I'm learning God, I'm loving God. I feel like someone, sometimes I feel like everything is a waste of time, like nothing matters, nothing is good. I know something has got to give, especially since my life is like starting over. I'm a child for a year. I have to get myself together. I know love means something, but loving myself means more. The only question I have is will I go to heaven? Everyone is a judge but Jesus said "no one shall judge but for the father is our judge." I'm tired of all the violence, I just want to get away. Life isn't about putting down or who is better but that we are all equal.

-Brittany, Alameda
From The Beat: You write a lot of important truths in this piece. Clearly you think a lot about life and your place in it. How has your God influenced your views?

18 Right Around The Corner

What's good beat this young Nuttso and for me my 18th birthday is right around the corner and I been thinking a lot about me turning 18. I'm happy because now I can do certain stuff and not get question about it. But it's always a flipside to it your family depend on you more because you're consider on grown up and you don't come to the hall no more you go to Rita.

But I'm bout to get my shhh straight so I won't have to worry bout going to Rita. And yeah I'm happy because I'm turning 18 because that's what most kids can't wait till that day come feel me but I'm getting out the day after my birthday but I'm still going to celebrate when I get but I'm gone Beat.

-Young Nuttso, Alameda
From The Beat: We're happy for you, and we wonder exactly how you plan to "get your shhh straight" so you can live a free man, many more years.

Last Words

Well, when I do get out of this piece of crap facility, I am going to be shipping out of San Francisco. I still don't know when or where. I really just wanna talk to my ex-girlfriend and tell her that I am sorry about what I did to her. All I want is for her to forgive me and at least for us to be friends, if not more.

Even though I have a new girlfriend, I would still do anything to get her back in my life. She was the best female I ever had. She stayed by my side the first time I was in here. She always loved me for me when she thought I was messing up, and that's why I still love her to this day. So if I could say anything to her, it would be that I am sorry for the things I did, and hopefully we can be together again some day.

What is also on my mind is that I am going to court on Thursday, and I know that I might still be in here at least two weeks to a month. I don't wanna be here, but I gotta do my time. All I know is that whoever offers me a place, I'm going to take it. All I wanna do is get out of here so I can turn my life around.

-Tony, San Francisco
From The Beat: As painful as the lesson is, one thing you've learned is that some consequences cannot be undone, no matter how much you wish they could. We hope your former girlfriend forgives you for whatever it was you did to her, whether she takes you back or not, even as a friend. We also hope you can apply this hard lesson to the rest of your life so that you truly can get your life back on track. What's your plan? What will you do to change direction?

Last Word

If I was to die I would want my little brother to know that I love him and I'm sorry I wasn't there for him except for when he was born. And teach him not to do the thing I did to mess up my life. And just listen to dad cause what you going to go through he probably went through himself when was young.

-Fat Stacks, Alameda
From The Beat: Can you write to your little brother and tell him what you feel is important? It sounds pretty important to us. It helps when you have someone you want to do right by. You'll be his big brother for a long time...don't wait!

Rest in Peace Scrilla

Rest in peace Scrilla I miss you my man. We hit licks together, had stacks in our hands, Yes my brother I remember them times, We did so much stuff but never got caught for a crime. Remember on when we did that dirt, Imagine if somebody died when that man got hurt. I mean I miss you I want you to know that me and you we like brothers. We go way back. When I heard the news I couldn't imagine it was you. Your own partner did you in. Is this fake or is it true. I know you up in heaven looking down on me, God is the real judge, hope he don't look down on me. In memory in love of my ninja, rest in peace. You still living in my blood so yo' heart still beating. I wish I could be with you. It will happen one day, so I'm praying every night for you like it's a Sunday. In loving memory of D. Michael M. Rest in peace Scrilla,

-Lil' Purp, Alameda
The Beat Within: We're sorry you lost someone who meant so much to you ... and as we imagine him looking down on you, we wonder what he'd think if he saw you get it together and be the first one to get that college degree, representing all he could have been.

Powerless

I feel powerless because I'm in jail I can't get nothing done in here I have to listen to other people's rules that I don't even know but in this world you gone have to listen to somebody to whole life but not like this if you get a job and they tell you what you have to do that to keep yo job but if you don't you can walk out that's a little power but that's also stupid because if you walk out on your job when they tell you to do something how you gone to feed yourself or pay bills but it's different in here you just totally powerless they tell you to do something you don't do it you get sent to yo room and that's not the only powerless thing but that's the one I hate the most I'm just gone to keep it like that.

-Boobie, Alameda

From The Beat: That was one heck of a sentence Boobie. We think you are gaining power in your writing, gaining power in being able to effectively express yourself, know yourself, and hopefully listen to what you really think. Some people say "Change your thinking, change your life." You could do that anywhere, anytime.

I Want To Graduate And Make My Mom Happy

Man, right now I feel mad because my PO still haven't came to see me. Man, I wanna get out of here soon. I have a baby on the way. It's supposed to come in July. When I get out of here, I'm never comin' back. I want to live a better life. I'm just gonna finish my probation and go to school every day.

Damn! My mom's stressin'. I hate when she stress, because she cries about me. I love her with all my heart. Man, I wanna make her happy and graduate, and I want to see my dad when he gets out of jail. I can't wait. I haven't saw him in hella long. He doesn't know that I'm in juvenile. I don't want him to know, because it will break his heart. I love my dad, too.

-Lipine, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course it breaks your mom's heart to see you in here, just as it would break your dad's heart if he knew. So your plan to finish probation and go to school every day is exactly the right plan. Don't forget it, because that's easy to do when you're back out there with the same temptations that led you here before. Keep your mom and your dad squarely in your heart and mind, and you won't disappoint them or yourself. Good luck!

I Am Sorry Mom

I am sorry mom for not listening to you when you told me not to join a street gang. I am so sorry I know I hurt you bad when you found out that I was in a gang.

Don't cry, mom. Forgive me for doing all the bad things I did. I am sorry for using drugs. I know I did wrong, and I Know I can do nothing about it and now I hurt you more for being locked up. I see those tears when you come visit me here, you try to hide it but I can see it in your eyes the sadness in your eyes.

I am sorry mom for bringing you to this place. I know when something is wrong with you. I know when you are happy or sad, I can feel it. I know when you are happy to see me when you come see me but it breaks your heart to see me in here.

I am sorry mom. I wish I could see you smile the way you use to when I was out. but I promise to do the right thing when I get out. Screw the gang life, I am done with it. You have always been there for me even if I did wrong and that is why I love you so much mom.

-Henry, Alameda

From The Beat: The love you feel for your mom is so powerful, and we can tell you know how much she loves you. Are there other people in your family that you and she can turn to for support, as you try to rethink how you live so that both of you can be happier?

What I See!

When I see myself in the next ten years
I see me in the NFL wearing the Dallas-Cowboys gear
As I sit here in YGC and I do my time
I see myself trying to regret, doing my crime
I miss my family, feels like I'm away all the time
I like getting' money but sometimes I get it in the wrong way
I stress out in my room thinkin' and thinkin' every day
So when I use my imagination to see what I can be
In the next ten years, this is what I see

-Mike-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope what you see comes true. If getting money the wrong way threatens your dream of playing for the NFL, it's not worth it! Go back to school and be noticed as a great football player there, and see what happens.

EMT

Yesterday I started an EMT college course.

Since I been here at camp, I've a first responder class which is like a pre EMT class which certified me in CPR and First Aid. I never expected to be interested in that type of work, but then the teacher got every one that graduated the class scholarships to real EMT school, with free books and uniforms.

I never thought I would actually have an opportunity like that coming to jail. I actually think I'm going to go forward with this career in my life. In only six more months I am going to certified as an EMT, then once I turn 18 I can work on an ambulance anywhere I want. I almost have my high school diploma. So all I have to do after that is turn 18.

-Jay-Jay, Alameda

From The Beat: It's amazing - if you do this for a living, one day it could be you who saves the life of someone who has been shot or hurt on these mean streets. And you will understand what they are going through, so you can be there for them with your skills AND your heart. Keep us posted, we hope you take that class.

My Experience

What up with The Beat? They gave us three topics to write about, but I chose this one for a reason. This reason is 'cause when my sister Jerry died, I never had anyone to share my true thoughts and feelings with. I was ten years old and too young to really understand what the word "death" meant, but it still hit me hard. During that time I was in a group home, and I was going bad over the tragedy that I just experienced, so they had me on meds, 'cause I couldn't deal with the fact that I just lost the closest person to me.

Back at the house, my family was split up, along with all six of her kids — three girls and three boys. I talked with all of them and it didn't hurt as bad as it did to me then, 'cause that they mom.

That's the thing with death. When it happens, you need to know how to deal with it in the right manner. 'Til this day, it still gets to me when I think about it, but not like it used to, and that's because I know how to deal with it. It's a lot out there who went through the same things, so I shared this with y'all, 'cause y'all could get a better understanding of me.

-B, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're so sorry you had to suffer this terrible loss when you were so young — too young to know how to deal with it. How do you deal with it now? Is it just the passing of time that has made it easier, or have you developed some strategies that could help others in this situation? (We're not sure what you mean when you say it hurt you more than the six kids, because that was their mom. Why wouldn't it hurt them even more?)

I'm Black And I'm Proud

So young and so pained.
Sharp like glass.
Tears of a dog barking in shame.
Who ever thought some one like me can be fire and get burned at fifteen?
Black or not. I'm still who I am.
Killed me a long time ago
Tears of a girl who cried help.
No one heard.
They walked right over me.
Now I'm the earth that company misery.
Cherish what you have.
Yet I'm still here.
So deal with it.
I'm being blocked by the world.
My face is smeared. So challenge me.
I'm black and I'm black, I'm black and I'm proud.
Faith in me, I'm a heart taking person.
So if you pass me, look at me like you proud.
No one above me, I'm past the cloud.
Don't pick cotton. I might talk loud.
But it's the black in me that make me smile.
So challenge me.
I'm black and I'm black and I'm proud.

Fly girl,
You got it all my first boy
Friend took me down fall.
Fly girl,
The good girl gone.

-Shantell, Alameda

From The Beat: The days of thinking of yourself as a good girl, a bad girl, a fly girl, a high girl, whatever, are all over... because now you are stepping into a new role, the role of a wise woman. It's time to ask yourself questions for the artist in you, the poet in you, about what kind of woman you want to be. (You said you wanted a challenge, so we challenge you!)

Hello Beat!

My daily struggle is like a blow to the chest from Mike Tyson, the knowledge of myself is enough to tell you what I'm going through...

My life is like Iraq,
never knowing when I'm going to be attacked,
the life I live is worthy of a gun,
my soul is guilty, it's like a bomb,
my body is hot but my sweat is cold,
I gotta be smart, I gotta stay on my toes,
being on the grind is grimy, but I gotta grind it out.
When I hear those sirens,
my heart skips a beat, then I say to myself.
Am I sensing defeat, defeat at it's early stage,
but I'm about to split like a broken heart on a rainy night,
are these words of guilt,
or are these words of a warrior who knew such a life?
Who knew such a life
and now no longer wants to be a part of these mean streets
and ally ways that we know as our Iraq!
From me to you as a young man who was in the game,
if things continue to go the way
it's going in East Oakland it's gonna be a ghost town.

-Meezy, Alameda

From The Beat: Without people like you, yes, Oakland might become a ghost town. But see, you have struggled, and you care about what you see, who you've lost. It's through your poems, through your songs, through your voice, that the streets of Oakland might be saved. But first you need to save yourself!

My Siblings And I

One picture that I wish I still had to look at to this day was a picture of me and my siblings. The picture was taken when I was hella young. I think it means a lot to me because we weren't always together and in that picture it shows us all huddled together all dressed up.

My life consisted of being apart from my family and even though I remember losing my mom to drugs when I was one, I always had my brothers and sisters. I think that helped me cope with all the burden and struggles of being an "orphan" (as my roommate always calls me). But lately my brothers and sisters have been fighting. I try and bring them together because family is important to me. But getting locked up doesn't help and it hurts because we've always been there for each other growing up and now we seem to be getting further apart.

I hope they know I still love them.

-Cisco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It must be hard being away from your siblings when you're all so close but the fact that your brothers and sisters aren't getting along must complicate things more. Do you think they're fighting more because you aren't there to be the mediator?

Never Been Soft, What I Feel Inside

Life is love ,love is life.
But I see that.
See different people different
Stares.
Makes me think about life and each individual
Who realy cares.
Pain in my chest tears in my eyes
For those who are now not here.
I wonder n wonder till I cant stop
Thinking.
Heart fills weak fills like its
Leaking.
I blank myself out don't care for
Fakes who's speaking.
I never let the system get the
Best of me I gotta maintain solid.
Like to meet older people in my life so
I continue to soak up their knowledge.
For those who see me and know me
No I stand tall.
As time goes on there ain't no
Telling when my head gonna fall.
The people close to me could also
Be my worst enemies
Thinkin' bout life and what was
Really meant for me.
God got a plan for me and I know it's
Good.
I hope when he saves me he'll
Let me bring the whole hood.
But till then my head up high
I may have emotional feelings but I got
Plenty of pride.
I'm gonna face my problems in this world
And what ever else it got in store.
I'm gonna be a solid individual
With troubles that can't be ignored.
Got hopes and dreams for when my
Baby born!

-Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: It's hard to see you back in the system, but great to see you back in our pages. How are you going to save yourself now, take those troubles and let them be your teachers, and use your pride for good and not for bad? Especially now, with a baby on the way!

Heartbroken

I really loved you
But man
Why did you do that?
Let me tell you my true life story
It all started out
I seen you on the bus
I was really sick
Throwing up all over the bus
You started talking to me
You seemed so sweet
What happened next
we connected peacefully
and hooked up
you took me to your sis' house
and introduced me
then you said to me
you can stay with me
I can show you
Some things
You ain't use to
Heartbroken heart broken heart
broken
Heartbroken heart broken
I gave you 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8
too many chances
Why you need to lie to me
I trusted you baby
With my mine, body, soul, and love
I cared for you

And loved you to
And this is what
I get in return
For loving you
But I know
What is best for me
Is to erase you
But I'm still heart broken
And my heart don't feel
Like it's healing
I wanted to have
Your body
You said
You wanted to have
A family with me
I checked your wallet one day
And twenty-females numbers
On a piece of paper
And I told you to throw them away
If you want to be with me
If not keep goin' your way
'Cause I don't need a ninja
I can do bad by myself
Or find somebody else
Better than you
To replace you
So you decide
To choose me
Over the numbers
So I though you was done

Creeping
The next thing was
I found a text message
From a female
In your phone
I called the number back
Saying my ninja don't want you
He only want your money
Boo
I told him let's call her back
Saying my ninja don't want you
He only want your money boo
I told him lets call her back
And tell her you don't want her
And that is that
He said no
I said is that so
Well than I'm leavin' you today
So we called her back
He told her what's up and said
I don't want you
I said loose this number chick
I told you my ninja don't want you
chick
Haha, click.

-Karmeisha, Alameda
From The Beat: Like we said in workshop, it seems like this guy has both his females played (that is, assuming there's only two). He's got you hating on each other, when the real set-up artist is him, lying to both of you! You know you deserve better, right?

A Goodbye Wave

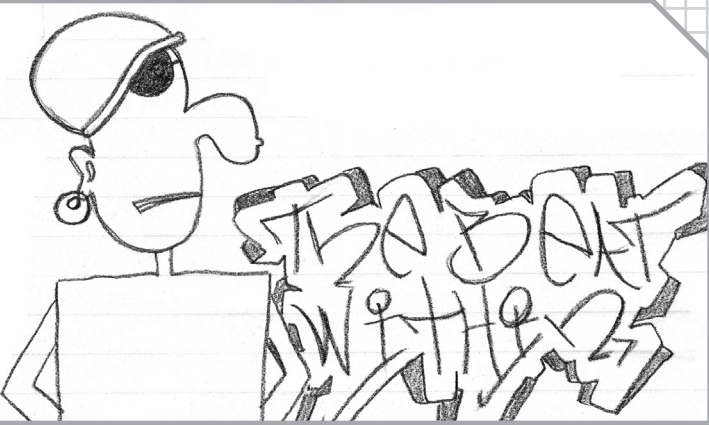
I left without any words....just a fair goodbye wave was all I gave you....
Tears fell from my eyes every morning as I got dressed....
Every day.... Thinking of how that day could have been....
Different.
Only if I knew I would never see you or hug you again....
I think I would not cry as much!
But Vernon, as every day passes I think of you....
All I could think of is what you would want me to do....
Seeing to how those know one didn't care how many people they were hurting when they killed you...baby boy I guess that my excuse why I don't care for life.
We fought we argued we done, done it all!
But can't nobody take you from me!

-Love you, Alameda
From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece, a reminder of how many people get destroyed and feel pain when one person is killed. Next time we hope you sign your name, so you can get credit for the words you say and the feelings you share.

Free At Last

“Free at last! Free at last!”
That’s what I hear from Uptown to Downtown!
“Free at last!” is what they holla
From the Point to the Rock
“Free at last! Free at last! Free at last!”
Is what I hear from Sunnydale to the Towers!
“Free at last! Free at last!”
Is what I hear from Mission to the TLs!
It’s a black President!
We need to holla, “Free at last!”

-Mr. Free Ya’self, San Francisco
From The Beat: We like the name you’ve chosen for yourself, because that’s what our new black President would tell you: he cannot free you; only you can free yourself. We love the fact that his election has inspired so many young people from all the ‘hoods to see what is possible in their lives. But freedom is not something won in an election. It is only achieved through personal struggle.



On My Mind

With all the spare time I have on my hands while I'm here, I get to do plenty of thinking. Here I lay with my head to the ceiling wondering if anybody is thinking about me, and if they are, why haven't they written me. I wonder if things are the same with me gone, not just at home but also at school and in the community.

I, being a role model to my lil' cousin, I wonder does he know if I'm here and if he does why didn't my family wait 'til I get out so I could tell 'em. With all the thinking some of us do, no wonder why people are stressed out and fed up with it all.

-Ballard, San Francisco
From The Beat: It's no wonder at all why people get stressed out in here, with so much on their minds and so much time to think about it. It's hard to remember when you're in here that on the outs, there are lots of things going on to distract you. When you were out, did you think about and write to homies that were locked up? Just remember that time in here is temporary, and you will be able to deal with your concerns directly and face-to-face when you're out.

Help

Man I'm praying for help while I'm looking at the life I left
It's hard now, I hate myself, but pride is kept right or wrong,
it's just the way I felt
I might be better off praying for death on my knees
Still trying to find a way to accept
Ain't sure I can help anybody 'till I save myself
Technically I'm still a slave myself
I got time before the grave myself
Man I played myself
While I'm looking past the heart I touch
I asked how can a man who done so much
Because they sell dope
God show them the rope
Be a father of football coach
A little mo' something to hope
Take another approach
Instead of reading testifying in court
Handcuffin' them and closing the do'
So they can be worse than before
Can you see we only do what we know?
And you wonder why we don't care no mo'
Life ain't fair
I know that's why I hate everywhere I go
The next ninja should compare my flow you know.

-Lil' B
From The Beat: You poem is very deep and shows a lot of the trials and tribulations that goes on in today's society. You do a good job of hooking up the missing link to what would seem like a lost world out on the street. Keep writing and producing and if you can keep at it your words can make a huge impact.

When I Get Out

When I get onto the street I want to stay out and have a good life and not come back to jail. I want to stay with my mom and I hope she come and see me tommorow. It would be good and I hope my brother Casey get out.
If he's not I'm going to drink a bottle of UV to the neck for my brother Casey. And I love this girl name Omq-nee and she love me. She is my life and my mom too and my brother Casey.

-Shonte
From The Beat: We're glad to hear you talk about the girl you love, and also your family, which are the people that want to see you out and doing good. But if your brother doesn't get out it doesn't mean you have to drink yourself drunk, be strong, stay solid, and in due time you will be reunited with him.

Can You Be

Can you be my raincoat for those dark and stormy nights?
Can you be my dream boat when I sail away?
Can you be my teddy bear?
I'll take you with me everywhere?
Can you be the breath for every step I take?
Can you be the key to my heart, my everything?
Can you be every empty source in my life?
Can you be that special someone in my life?
Can you be that heart to my beat?
Can you be more than just a friend?
Can you be that empty spot on my pillow?
Can you be mine?
No questions asked.

-Tay
From The Beat: This is a very sweet poem! You are a very skilled writer. If you wrote this for someone you really do care about out, you should send it to her to let her know how you feel.

Last Word

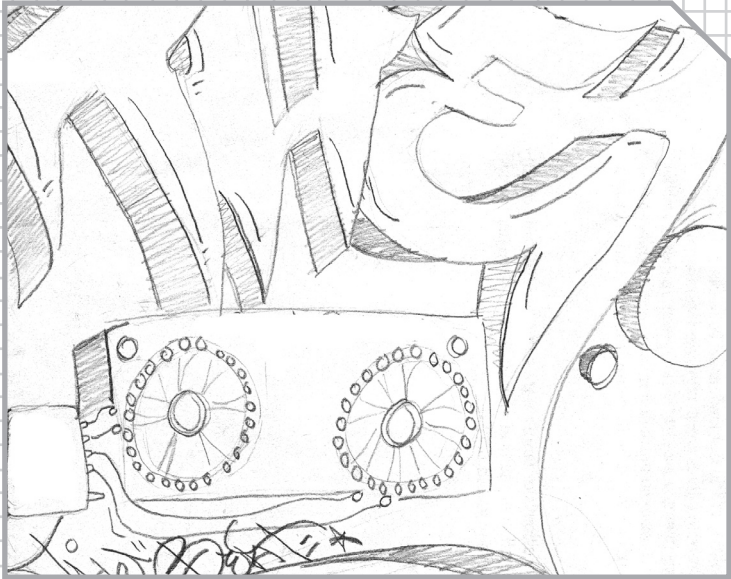
I will show no fear no lie
When I die
I will look death in the eye

-Bill Gates
From The Beat: And what will that prove Mr. Gates? Death doesn't care if you have fear or not...why do you think you must be fearless? Why can't you be human like everybody else? What if you lived a life where you didn't have to act hard as cement? and could love and have a wife, and kids—a good job and feel good about what you contribute to the world—rightly fearing losing all that?

Charged

Well I am being charged for assault but I didn't do it.
Now some people have told me I should have plead guilty and they probably would let me out on ankle monitor or GPS.
They should've told me earlier because now I already went to trial and some people said if I lose the trail I could get six months in this hall. If I win they might let me out with nothing just a straight release, but I regret that because I think I should have plead guilty.

-Young and detained
From The Beat: Well you shouldn't listen to what anyone tells you and the only legal consultation you should get is from a professional lawyer. If you say you are innocent than fight it all the way. You should have nothing to worry about it and your innocence will reveal in due time.



I'm Out This thang on EM

What's up Beat? Tomorrow I get off on EM. I'm too juiced 'cause I can finally be with my mom, family, friends, bra's and all the girls hahaha y'all know how it be with the girls. Another reason why I can't wait to go home is because in here you can't do shit. You gotta wake up and eat and shower when they say so.
But at home I eat when I want and do what ever I want
“As long as it's the right thing. Man I can't wait to go back home and be back in my own room. And I can't wait to get my phone back “side kick lx.” But one things I hate the most is these dirty ass clothes in here

-Darren
From The Beat: Congratulations and we wish you luck. We hope that you don't go back out there and take your freedom for granted. Don't come back. You got an opportunity so don't waste it. You're never gonna get the time that you lost back, but you can sure prevent time from being lost.

My Court Date

Last week at court I thought I was getting out. I decided to write a letter and had positive things to write about. I didn’t do anything that bad. When I found out when I was leaving I was mad. I only violated my probation. Being in here is like a worse vacation, I have to do some program in here. I’m a good person and respect my peers. So I don’t understand why I’m not getting out of here.

I’m on honor unit wearing gold. The food here aint good, bread full of mold. Sitting in my room alone I feel so cold. Police make the world hot. Girls in here pretending that they something they not. I feel old in here like I’m about to rot. Days are going by kind of fast and I’m slowly forgetting about the past. Life is too short so I got to make it last. I’m leaving on February 25th, 2008. So I’m going to make my last days great.

-Kilonta
From The Beat: It’s frustrating getting punished for something that seems so small, but what if you think about this from the other side? The judge might very well be thinking how frustrating it is that someone can’t do something as small as keeping probation. It may seem stupid, but if you follow it you’re free from the system.

Live In The Sky

How you doing, Baby Skin, just trying to get by. I ain’t seen you in a while, I’m just doin’ this time. I’m thinking about all of the days I’m just lovin’ to shine.

Rest in peace Baby Skin, I know you live in the sky. If I tell you that I love you man, I ain’t gonna lie. I bent prayin’ to God to let me live in the sky. I might not make it to Heaven but I swear I’m gonna try. Ain’t gotta smoke no more ‘cause I’m already high. Will I really have mansion, could I see it with my eyes? Everybody got a mansion I can see from the sky. Picture Hawaii and Bahamas, same place same time. Everything so pretty everything so nice I’m gonna live in the sky with eternal life.

-Dirt Laden
From The Beat: Dirt Laden, you often mention Baby Skin, but you haven’t told us much about him. What was he like? What did he love to do? We’d love to hear about some of your memories with Baby Skin in your next entry...

Proud

I’m first proud to say I been sober for a month.

Last Wednesday I seen my mom, every time I see her she gives me hope and makes me laugh. She says I’m getting out on the 2nd, and everybody misses me and is chanting for me.

As for my dad he’s never come to visit me once while I was here, and it’s been about 15 days. He once told me he would never come visit me in jail but I never understood how my own dad who has never been in my life can’t even show he cares now when I need him the most. But my stepdad who ain’t even my real dad can come and visit me even after I cussed and fought with him.

Through-out my whole life every time something bad happen my mom always told me it’ll be ok, but this time I’m having a hard time believing her. Pushing my aunty back after she pushed me wasn’t worth this, and especially not over no orange juice top that she wanted.

-Shastia
From The Beat: It must be frustrating being locked up for something so small, and wishing you had support from your dad. We’re glad you have a good relationship with your mom and stepdad. They seem really supportive and helpful – keep them close.

Last Words

Dear Oakland,

I’ve been in these streets for 18 years, I have seen a lot of people cry a lot of tears. Grew from a baby to man and learned a lot, went from playing hoops to grindin’ on the block. Winter to summer and back again.

I lost family members and a lot of close friends. I took a lot of losses and made a lot of gains, gotta eat so I grind in the rain.

I’m gonna miss these streets I swear I will, but I gotta go before I get killed.

-B
From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you will be trying something new. What is your plan?

Pictures Of You

Today for some reason I’m not mad that I’m in the hall. Even though we been in here for two months I’m just happy to be alive!

Pictures of my father are my best memories because my father is dead. Every time I look at a picture of him it makes me sad because I barely knew him. But it also makes me happy because I was in a lot of the pictures I got.

-Lil’ Seag
From The Beat: It’s great that you’re seeing the glass as half full – this is something we don’t see in a lot of writings. This outlook on life can do great things for you – don’t lose it!

Last Words To My Girl

I would talk to my daughter because I would truly miss her. I would tell her how much I miss her big smile and how she makes me laugh when she make the funny little faces she makes. I would tell her how sad I would be to be separated from her and don’t know how long it would be when it’s the next time I see her.

The thing I’m trying to say is that I wouldn’t want to leave the only person I have behind then start from something else that my life will be destroyed without my baby girl by my side. She’s all I have and she will know how heart broken I’ll be when I tell her that we won’t see each other for a very long time.

-Alysia
From The Beat: It can be sad to even think about the possibility of leaving your child for a long time. Your showing a really deep and true love here, it’s really a touching thing to read.

Change IS Big

I really do want to change and this time I’m serious. I believe I could get my life back on track and do good like normal kids my age. I do believe that I’m going to come up, graduate high school, get a job, my GED, go to beauty college, and career college.

I want to be a model and I will once I go through all this and be somebody that I always have I have a bright future ahead of me. I’m telling you I’ll be famous one day, I just have to go step by step. I’m going to have my own modeling career when I turn 25 ‘cause you can’t model at 25 that’s why I’m going to have my own career for other girls, “kids” like me. I could make a difference.

-Moniqua
From The Beat: You can make a difference, and helping young people is a great way to create change. The younger kids are, the easier change can be. If you really believe you can reach your goal, and you work hard for it, there’s no reason you can’t get there.

Once Trapped but Now I’m Free

Since I’ve been in here it changed me as a person and a lot of it made me worse.

I was just fourteen when I first got arrested for assault and battery against my mother, and I really didn’t do anything to her. She put her hands on me and I pushed her off and ran away. When the police found me I was arrested. Every since then I’ve been in and out. I’ve never got another case except for violations ‘cause I kept running from wherever they put me.

I was just a troubled teen going through emotional problems, but since I was always running away and introduced to the streets and the game of them it changed me as a person. I don’t regret anything cause it’s made me a stronger person and grow up more maturely than others, but in reality I wish I didn’t have to go through all this cause I’m not a criminal.

If they offered more programs for teens other than just locking us up or sending us away than maybe our community would be a better place. But then again these judges or PO’s don’t care bout our feelings cause this is their job and at the end of the day they going home and they getting paid, but hopefully with our new President “Obama on my momma” things will change and he’ll provide more help for the youth! But in actuality I really just wish I didn’t have such a dysfunctional life or family. But I won’t let that bring me down because I got too much to live for and I know I’m better than all this.

I’m almost eighteen and I can’t be acting the way I do. It’s time for me to step into the REAL world and it’s called adulthood, even though eighteen ain’t the magic number, it’s a motivation on what’s real to me.

-Valentine B
From The Beat: Sounds like you’ve done a lot of thinking about how you got to where you are, and how that’s affected you. The next step might be to figure out what “stepping into the real world” means. How do you have to change your behavior to adjust?

Picture Of My Grandpa

The picture that will always remember is one of my dead grandpa. He was wearing a black jacket and blue jeans. The reason I will always remember this picture is because that’s the last time I remember seeing him alive.

My mom always says I look like him but I don’t remember him clearly. That’s why I always try to find out more about him so I can remember him and try to remember memories we had. It was on his birthday he was seating on the chair waiting to leave and my mom took a picture then him and my uncle, auntie, grandma, and my grandpa they all went to dinner.

-Remembering Grandpa
From The Beat: We think it’s great that you want to find out more about your grandpa, and the life he lived. Does your mother ever tell you stories about him?

Last Words

If I had to say some last words to my peoples and I was going away, I would say: Stay true to yourself, don’t trust nobody and get money every day like it’s your last, and stay away from suckers.

But I won’t leave my folks and not come back. and I will only say I love you to only the people. I love if I don’t love you I ain’t saying it.

-J
From The Beat: These all sound like good last words. One thing though: When you’re in the game, no one can be trusted... but is that the only way to live? Or are there other possibilities?

My Girlfriend's Birthday!

What’s up Beat, this is yo’ boy Ghost. Wow today I am going to write about my girl’s b-day. My girl b-day was one of my bad days I ever had ‘cause I couldn’t be with her on her birthday.

I was really sad ‘cause that’s one of the persons that I really love and I always want to be with her but something I cant be with her ‘cause her parents and her brother be trippin’.

But it’s all good though, I am not tripping off them. Her b-day was on 2-1-09 but hope I get to see her this weekend. That’s all for today, later...

-Ghost
From The Beat: In a way, we can understand that her family might worry about her, because they want the best for their little girl... If you stopped going to jail, and started doing as well in life as we know you can, do you think her family would stop “trippin”?

Reminiscing In Paradise

Yes, that picture takes me back. October 31st, 2007. It was at the 2007 Halloween Massive at San Francisco. We went to that function 18 packed cars deep, and a party bus. It literally seemed like the whole neighborhood was there. We was acting up, parking lot pimping, and before we all went inside the Cow Palace, we gathered up and we all took a picture together. It must have been almost like 50 of us dressed up in crazy costumes throwing up our gang sign. Boys and girls. Old and young.

Time has passed and 10 out of the 50 is in jail and 2 out of the 50 is (rest in paradise). I would look at the picture with a smile on my face and tears in my eyes. So much memories in one photo, to me worth more than a million dollars.

-Lady A
From The Beat: Sounds like you had a really great Halloween that year, something you’ll remember forever. We’re sorry a few are no longer with us, and hope that you will soon be in that majority of people who are alive, healthy and free.

My Hood

Well when my family and I moved I was devastated. Born and raised in an area you love and enjoy was hard on me to understand that I will be leaving to a neighborhood I don’t know nothing about. I’m so used to living on Seventy-First that I never even thought about leaving ‘cause where I’m from, we like a whole big family and everybody know everybody. All my friends, people I grew up with, known all my life, like my sisters. We’ll be leaving them soon. I was so upset because that same week I had plans that we was going to get popping. But when my mom announced the news to us at the dinner table, my whole world crash before my eyes. I considered this street to be my life, I was born and raised and when I say born I mean born in a house between Spender and Hamilton.

Shhh it was like losing my best friend, but eventually I got over it because I visit like everyday. My new neighborhood is boring, real quiet. That’s why when I’m at home I’m in the house or my friends that live right next door or my other friend that live across the street so I’m not lonely. But what I will say to my friends is that don’t miss me cause I will be back real soon, sooner than you think, and I will miss my boo always sitting on my porch, him and my potnas, having a big ball.

-The Baddest
From The Beat: Moving away from where you grew up can be really hard – it’s a big change. But change can be good too – it can open up new doors or give you a chance to start over or change things for yourself in a positive way.

Special Moments

The picture that carries the most memories would be an old picture with all my goons having hecka fun. This picture carries memories because that was a night that my folks and I would never forget. That's just one picture that had captured a moment, but there are many more pictures that had a special moment.

The other photos would be with my family and with my two dogs Chops and Bambi that I miss really bad right now. The last would be a picture with my lady. The memory never fades away and I'm missing her more and more everyday.

-Young Whisper
From The Beat: Thank you for sharing, Young Whisper. You leave us curious about the picture of you and your friends?...What are you doing in the picture? What moment, exactly, are you capturing?

Memoire

I remember when I was 12 years old and it was picture day and I got in trouble at school so my mama came to my school, and she was hella mad, so she started to pinch my cheeks.

And when I took my picture one of my cheeks was bigger than the other and everybody thought I got beat up. I could never forget that day cause she got mad cause she paid 35 dollars for them pictures.

-Baby Cakes
From The Beat: Such a funny story, one you'll probably remember every time you see that picture. Is this experience characteristic of your relationship with your mother? Do you still get really mad at each other now?

The Insomnia of My Nights

That picture
The one that makes me reminisce
The one that makes my mind wander.
The one that stands out from all of my pictures,
The one that makes my eyes watery.
The insomnia of my nights.
The picture that makes me get lost in pain

-Sad Boy
From The Beat: We didn't know if you intended this as a poem, Luis, but it sure felt like one when we read it... a poem of lamentation and sorrow. But wait, who and what is this picture of? You never told us!

Do They Really Love Me?

It's real just like Treal when he say money is what we live for, but that ain't real if you a solid ninja like me, 'cause if you is, you would knock anybody off for the green. I'm solid like steel and to all my ninja's and my loved ones, for the money I will not kill, now that's real.

If money was everything why ninja's stress when they got it?

To me, it's just something people don't wanna live without. I love money but I love my loved ones more, if I could I'd trade in all the doe to bring back my folks.

A lot of ninja's told me they love me, and wouldn't do it for the money but I can't take a life for ya, and show you nothing but love, but when the money's on the line they would set you up!

I see ninja's love me but they love money more. That's why I stay to myself 'cause I ain't ready to go.

-Delay
From The Beat: You some excellent points Delay, but you make a disturbing statement at the beginning, that you would knock people off for the green. Are we understanding you correctly? It seems to go against what you say in the rest of the piece...

Walk A Hundred Miles

God bless Tc.
To show my lil' ninja I love him, I will walk a hundred miles.
Kept a gun on me just to make my street snow.
My young ninja died, I'm on a rampage now.
My mama talks to me like I need to slow down,
but she ain't gonna be on the block when shhh go down.
Some people say look at your friends been through.
But what ever happens this just what I'm gonna go through.
I told my mama that I'm happy to have you.
I got love for the streets, but she happy to have me.
And I will walk a hundred miles to bring back her daddy.
I look the Lord in his eyes and ask what I should do,
he told me go back to school and stop breaking all the rules.
But every time I feel my hip it's like there's nothing I can do,
every time a car drives by I be grabbing my tool.
Like should I shut the engine down and make it do what it do.
I be praying to the Lord, some enemies come through.
But God askin' me in my mind, is this the right thing to do?
I take an eye for an eye, the Bible said it was true.
So if you pull out a gun I'm gonna do what the Lord told me to do,
self defense on my waist put his body to waste,
and I will walk a hundred miles to be in God's place.
Walk a, 100, miles to be with my family everyday in bring back everybody who gone away.

-Dirt Laden
From The Beat: You have the Lord and your mother telling you to take the path of education, instead of the streets. Why is it so hard to listen to them? What do you want for your own future?

I'm Not Feelin the Topics Tonight...

I'm waiting for a placement to accept me which is frustrating me and it is going to be tempting to run again. Hopefully I get accepted so I can leave this week or next week. I am glad my brother will be released this week, I look forward to seeing him free without any worries...

-Chris
From The Beat: It's always tempting to run from a place you don't like. We hope you keep the big picture in mind though - if you run, what will happen next? What will happen if you get caught? Are those consequences worth the risk?

Moving On

Moving away isn't always hard but most of the time it is, leaving your friends, family, neighborhood etc... you and them might be mad at such an idea but it might be the way and direction to head in. Like if your family had a final crisis and had to move far away to a relative's home or if your house caught on fire, losing everything and still you have to move on without a word... it might be hard but that's the only option you and family have so you move on leaving you friends and neighbors all behind in the past.

-Sparks
From The Beat: Do you think it would help you, if you were given the opportunity to move far away? If so, how?

Dear Berkeley

I have a lot of special and memorable times on your many blocks and streets from the waterfront to the south and have grown to love you with a special passion.

You were there when I sold my first bundle, hit my first lick had smoked my first blunt, bought my first gun, ran my first bop, caught my first case and so on. Those are a lot of special moments in a young man's life.

Over the years you became apart of me. Keep it lit for me until I return home. Goodbye Berkeley.

-Berkeley Native
From The Beat: Appreciate reading your thoughts to Berkeley. But all the memories you listed are illegal activities... What other memories do you have of Berkeley? We want to hear them all, not just the ones that will keep you from being anything in this world!

It's Me And My Pistol

In the game
A respected individual
Father left early
Acting real hypocritical
Got into ma street gang
Times real critical
Moms got hit the beef is on
Make ninja skitzo
Frisco g from the block, just
In case you didn't know
Makin' money on the block
That's what I live for
Got no one in this world
It's me and my pistol.

-Ruben
From The Beat: Is this really all there is to live for? You've shown a lot of talent as a writer and a thinker, there's a lot of ways to make money where you don't have to risk your life and your freedom. What about giving that a try?

Love and I'm Sorry

the last words I will say to my mother, girlfriend and my grandma is that I'm sorry for all the stress I caused, and that I love them with all my heart and that I'm always going to love them.

And I'm always going to have them in my heart I just want say thank you for supporting all this time.

Well that's pretty much what I had to say ...that would be my last words aight then I'm out!

-Nano
From The Beat: You could also think of these as first words... first words of love and determination that the future will be different from the past! The first words of the new you!

When I Get Released

What's good. This is Boo, and I'll be out soon.

I'm still holdin' it down at camp doin' this time but it's nothing I'll be out in two months. I'm gonna be back on the block with my real folks you know me I'm gonna foo' with it. all my loved ones out there on the streets are doin' it live while I'm up here. On some the shhh these staff get on my nerves. I feel like crackin' them 'cause they be tryin' to control you when they just regular ass people. But it's good 'cause when I get released I'm gonna be laughin' in they faces 'cause they would of never thought I would of made it out but they wrong.

-Boo
From The Beat: It's a good attitude, to remind yourself to just let that staff drama roll off your shoulder - but remember, the victory isn't getting out... it's staying out! What's your plan for that?

My Memory

There is a picture of me and my cousin at a very young age and we both look happy but at the same time mischievous. I cherish it because it was a time it was a foreshadowing of the trouble we would get into later in life.

-Trevon
From The Beat: You have left us intrigued. Tell us the story of you and your cousin....

The Block Has Brought Me Nowhere

It's ya boy Ruben from San Francisco again, just chillin' in camp, hella bored.

All I do is lift weights and try to finish my school so when I get out I will better myself for me, for my mom. and for my wifey. My Shorty really motivates me to do good and I'm really feelin' that because honestly without her I would have ran away from camp and went straight to the block to keep hustlin' and funkin'.

But I'm not because I've been on the block since I was 10 or 11 years old, and it hasn't brought me nowhere but to the hospital for getting jumped or seeing my potnas getting shot and stabbed.

Shhh... even my mom got hit before.

But no more. I'm not saying I'ma stop being part of the block, but I'ma at least get my priorities straight because I'm tired of letting my mom and my wifey down. I wanna better myself so I can learn to love them , because my mom always said you can't love someone if you don't love yourself.

Well I'm out—

-Ruben
From The Beat: Yeah, the block has put you through too much drama! It's gonna be a tightrope to stay true to the block and to you... is it even possible? How will you do it, break it down for The Beat!

Just For You Mama

Dear mama, I'm sorry about all the stress I've been causing you.

If I could I would buy the world for you, so the earth can be yo' play ground. Before you leave this world just know you will be the happiest woman on earth.

Mama I know I'm yo' only son and you my only mama, so I'm gonna do whatever it takes to make you feel untouchable.

I love you mama.

-Junior
From The Beat: Lovely words for your mother. What do you think she most wants for you? Is it really money? Because there are things that are more precious than that, things money can't buy... what do you think they might be?

Engaged To The Game

How I see myself in ten years.
Looking at myself so clear in the mirror.
All I see is success riding in a range.
Twenbty-fours on the whip been doing my thang.
Diamonds look like skittles in my watch or chain.
They call me the news cause I'm gonna make it rain.
She say she married me but I'm engaged to the game.
Diamonds on my neck just to change her brain.
Pink and blue Benzes for me and my main

-The Boy Boy Mess
The Beat Within: The game is gonna fake you, play you and break you, make it rain till the lightening comes down, leave you shivering on the ground, get out while you can and find a new way, so you live on to a better day!

Not Trippin'

What's up with it Beat? This is yo' boy Kash Money from Oakland and I'm still here in Camp Sweeney finishing my time.

I'm already going for my 6th month so that means I'm already going to get back to my normal life again with my familia and on my varrio again.

Well I'm going to do my last week coming up which is the 2-14-09 I been restriction for a month and I been stressing sometimes, but I ain't tripping of that shhh, I'm getting used to this place a lot.

But that's something bad.
Well my birthday is February 20 and I'm happy I'm gonna come out that day and be with my familia and my homies I'ma have a little kick back and be with my lady. Well I'm out and one last thing I have to say is I love baby JL.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: You're right, no one should 'get used' to being in the system. On the other hand, if you are taking advantage of the programs (EMT, Cornerstone, Thunder Road, etc) then maybe you can say that this time has truly been good for you and your loved ones? You tell us.

Last Words Before Sacramento

Well I can relate to this topic because I will be going to Redding which is close to Sacramento.

I am kind of depressed. All I can say though is I will see them soon, which means I might see them in a year or two. But now I need to worry about me. So when I do come back to my 'hood they would know that I changed.

I would have me a spot, whip, job and in college. So they will be happy and surprised for me.

-Karmeisha

From The Beat: We would be happy too! But not surprised, because we've seen how much talent and heart you have, and how great you can be when you set your mind to it!

Where I Live

The person who I would tell that I was going to move are my parents because if I move without telling them they are going to be really worried. And the person who I would not tell are my friends because they don't really need to know where I move to or where I live.

When I talk to my parents and they tell me about life in the outs it just makes me feel like I'm never going to get out. Also when I talk to my girl on the phone and she tells me how much she loves me she makes me feel really special, and then when it's time to go I go to my room and I think about her and my family.

-Rigoberto

From The Beat: We are glad you have people supporting you.

Dear Beat, I'm Hella Sick

Dear Beat, Today is Tuesday 2-3-09, and I'm kinda mad because I'm hella sick. The nurse told me they were goin' to call me to the medical after school and they did not... So screw it.

I get my exit meeting this Thursday so then I find out by what's next and that's on March or April. I'll be on my home passes at Livermore all day posted, doin' my thang.

-Knuckles

From The Beat: We say this to you a lot but we'll say it again: How are you going to stay out of jail if you go right back to the spot and 'do your thang?' Break the pattern, because we'd hate to see it break you.

Last Words: Be Cool and Be Safe

If I had some last words to say I would go to my hood and tell everybody to be cool and be safe and stay all about that money.

But I would always come back to my hood cause if it wasn't for that I wouldn't never be who I am today.

I wish I could get out this thang, but I'm gonna do my time and get out this thang... but I would say just keep yo' head up and be easy.

-Festy

From The Beat: Of course you love your hood. It's your home. On the other hand, can you be a part of it without getting caught up in the trouble that gets you locked up? Or will you need to take a break so you can get your life where you want it?

My Cousin

The picture that I see the most is my cousin We were smoking and with some female. We were at a party kickin' it. So that was it we were just kickin' in it

-Sergio

From The Beat: What is it about this memory that is powerful to you? Is it your relationship to your cousin? Was it the moment in time, how you felt right then? What does that picture show you about what you care about in life?

The First Day I Met my Girlfriend

The picture that I will always keep and carry with me is the first day I met my girlfriend. That was a really special day and I'm never going to forget that one day.

The day that I met her I was on my way to the store and she was in the park with another girl, and she saw me. I was with my cousin and my cousin knew her and her friend.

-Rigoberto

From The Beat: When she saw you what did she do? It sounds like you knew she was affected by you just like you were with her.

A Picture of My Grandma

Well that special picture that I will cherish is my grandma because she passed away when I was about 9 years old.

I was spending most of my time with her. She would take me to park or go in a long walk around Fruitvale to go shopping for me. Basically I was with her all the time and I still miss her a whole lot because she was like my best friend.

I will always cherish that picture!!!

-Lil' G

From The Beat: What a beautiful memory. Do you ever wonder what kinds of words of comfort she would give you now, to help comfort you in your pain while you are locked up? Do you wonder what would make her proud? We hope you keep her love in your heart forever.

Three Questions, Three Answers

Last words: I would say tell my mom that I love her and the rest of my family to my sister, my cousins, my uncles, my baby mamas and my kids to.

That picture: I would take the picture of my family because I love them.

I'm not feeling the topics tonight. Just thinking about getting out of here and getting to see my family so we can have fun and talk about what I was doing here.

-Travon

From The Beat: Thanks for trying out a couple topics, we know it's hard to answer a question when what's really on your mind is missing your family. Next time remember you can write on whatever you want!

Didn't Get Enough Time

The last picture was the best you must confess

RIP to all my ninjas that got put to rest, it was good while it lasted cause they held on strong but some haters took 'em out and did them wrong, That picture they took of me when I came to jail was so messed up cause I was high as hell and the mail I received while sitting in my room I didn't even write back to them ' cause I was sick and doomed I don't get enough time to finish this rhyme But I'll get back at y'all next time.

-J Baby

From The Beat: You stopped 'cause workshop was just about through/ but you gave us a hint on what you can do/so next time put it down and give us your heat/so you can earn a Piece of the Week!

The Key To My Heart

Late at night,
When I should be asleep,
Into my heart,
You quietly creep,
I sit and ponder,
How it could be,
But you must have stumbled,
Across the key,
I know our friendship,
Could mean so much more
But it's up to you to open the Door.

-Lil' Pooh-Bear

From The Beat: We hope these words were written by you and you alone, and that they are written to a person worthy of your feelings!

Thanks Mom

Mom... I love you I just wanted to say thank you for being the best mom a kid could get: Best food, fun to play video games with, and loving caring and strict. I love you and can't wait for you to get better. Love you always

-Haley

From The Beat: You know the best thank you that you can ever give your mom is for you to get better, so that she knows her little girl is gonna be OK, no matter what.

Life

Man my life is not good a ninja be wanting to go home but can't and then up in max 2 ninjas be gone bad for stupid shhh get the unit on lockdown so you can't call yo fam man this not cool but a that's life in max 2.

-Lil' Chuck

From The Beat: Everything everybody does clearly affects everyone else there. It's like a microcosm of the world, but out here it isn't so obvious.

Peace

The judge and D.A. keep playing with me, don't go back until February 20th, stay having my court dates hella far apart, waiting to get sentenced so my time could start, I aint tripping nobody especially in here, gotta stay strong for my family, myself so I don't shed no tears.

-Lil' Rolo

From The Beat: This must take a lot of patience and strength to wait out. What do you do that helps sustain you day to day? Do you read books that are inspiring, or write out your frustration, or work out?

What's On My Mind?

What I have learned since I've been here is that the system is not playing with me at all they are charging me as a adult and giving me a strike and putting me on 5 years probation.

They say I might get out next week or two. But the thing is that when I get out I cannot do the same things I used to do. Like for example I can't smoke weed no more and I can't go to school when I want to. I'm gonna have to go to school everyday from now on or my PO is going to violate my ass. I'm gonna have to start doing good in school so I can pass high school and hopefully get into a community college and work with the city of Oakland as a landscaper and stop messing up in the street before the system ends up washing my lil' self. I'm gonna just say that when I get out I'm gonna try my best to do good and stay out of trouble.

-Kris

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a solid plan. What are the obstacles you think will be in the way, and how do you plan to deal with them?

Last Words

If I was to die in front of my family my last words would be "I love you, and stay strong."

My patna, when he died, he told me to keep my head up in the game and everybody ain't your friend. At the time I didn't know what he was talking about 'cause I was little, but as I got older I started to understand what he was saying. Now I know, he was trying to say there are a lot of haters out there and everybody ain't your friends. Now I really understand because when I start making more money then the people that put me on, they tried to have me knocked off, but instead they snitch on me, and got me locked up, so I had to keep my head up and learn everybody ain't my patna. Stay strong.

-Baby G

From The Beat: How can you tell who the people are you can trust? Do you trust your family? Do you trust yourself?

My Lady

If I had to leave you for some strange reason I would be physically and mentally crushed but fortunately I don't think it'll happen unless something big happens like a scholarship or something.

The most important thing I'd have to confess to is cheating on my girl but it was honestly a mistake. I've kept this secret for so long because I'm afraid of the outcome so for now I'm gonna keep it to myself. Don't tell her I told you.

-C-Nasty

From The Beat: How could cheating on your girlfriend be a mistake. Explain it!

...Different Day

I'm doing good because I just made players club, you know that's the highest level in unit 2. I been waiting a month to make it. Other then that I am doing cool. The same shhh different day can't wait to get out, but yeah I got court soon and I might get released. That's it for today!

-Big Body

From The Beat: You have to live with a lot of uncertainty even though each day is the same. We hope you are making good plans for your life, no matter when you are released.

Struggles

Sometimes the things that seem to hurt us the most are the very things that bring out the best in us in life you know...
They are the struggles that help us discover the faith we thought we lost in the courage to let go of the past and begin again and again...
Because challenges help us to see who we really are, where we want to go, and what our lives can be if only we have faith and keep on trying. Practice makes perfect I promise that...

-Lil' Twin

From The Beat: We love the ideas we hear in this piece. Can you give us some examples, from your own life – past, present, future – of ways in which these words have proven true for you?

Last Words

My mans and them said they bout to go cop that last bird, but I never thought that'll be his last word, last words can be death words, death words can be safe words, when you lock in cell it's a must you gotta take words, I got into it with my girl "I hate you" was her last words, the click of the one was the last thang that I heard.

-Young Arco

From The Beat: We think you have moved, and wish you well. Our last words (at least for now) are Take care of yourself.

Let's Take It Back

Lets take it back to my first fist-fight or how I used to go skating every Saturday night growin' up without a father in my life Mom's took 'em to court, didn't even want to pay child support.
My heart ain't skippin' no beat. I ain't losin' no sleep for all I care he could be dead in the streets.
I got a whole lot to say and this goes to my brother Trey locked down in Y-A keep yo' head up G only the strong survive.
Keep doin' yo' thang while I hold it down on the outside.
I used to let off clips in huddles now I'm in the hall telling all about my struggle.
I used to be the devil without the horns...

-Ant

From The Beat: This flow cuts off at the middle/so we'll wait till next week for the rest of the riddle/these few lines are packed with so much information/we feel like it would take a whole book to break down your situation!

New Case

What's up with it this is yo' boy Snowman. I'm back in the hall 'cause I caught a new case. I just got released from camp December 19th. I was hella happy .
I am about to get out because the DA doesn't have enough evidence in my case.
I got charged with loitering/possession with attempted sales. I can't wait to get out and get to see my kid get born sometime in March. It's a boy. so I'm lucky to get that. If anyone in camp reads this and you know me what's up and stay up don't run finish that shhh.
Late!

-Snowman

From The Beat: We're glad you won't catch this case, but in your heart of hearts, are you ready to avoid that trouble again? You have a baby boy coming, and he needs his daddy! No more selling, we hope! You and your new family need you out free.

What's Goin On Wit' Me

I'm just in this thing chillin' waitin' to get released man. A lot on my mind man, just cant wait to come home and get back in school.
Can't wait till I can get out an do good and prove people wrong to show 'em I can stay out of jail. I gotta make wiser choices and be on my toes cause if I come back they gon' wash me!! Wish me luck

-Lil' Fred

From The Beat: What are some examples of the wiser choices you'd like to start making? And what are you looking forward to in school?

Can't Sleep

My bed had a creak because I lost some pennies in it while I was listening to the radio. I moved some tile on top of it so the bed wouldn't want to shiver and I sewn it together, the silence. That's how I sewed it back together.

-Sed-B

From The Beat: Hm, we think the bed might jingle with pennies instead of creak. What were you listening to on the radio, and more than that how do you sew silence back together? If you make your own bed and yours is shivering what is that like Sedi? Write more to us.

My Daily Struggle

My daily struggle is knowing that I have to do another day without seeing my family. I get through my day in here by reading and sleeping. This experience is so stressful.
Some days I don't think I'm going to make it through the day. I don't get to talk to my loved ones... that hurts me a lot. I wish I could go home soon. This ain't the place for me and I'm pretty sure I'm not coming back here. This is one of my mistakes in life that I wont make again.

-DeVaughn

From The Beat: As hard as it has to feel you can't make it another day, each day you DO make it, you get past it. Doesn't that mean that each day you have a victory that you weren't sure of? Victory!

I Need My Freedom

I wanna scream
Rip these clothes to seams
I wanna cry but tha tears won't
Come down but I do frown
If I do happen to cry I might
Drown
I have no soul
Lost that at 12 years old
I have no sympathy
Nor any remorse
to relieve my pain a pencil is
My source
I would rather use a gun
But in the hall guns are done
I hate to get violent
But I have learned
Respect is earned
This is not my kingdom
I need my freedom

-Keek

From The Beat: A person without a soul could never write from deep within the soul like you do here! So whatever happened when you were twelve, you and your heart and soul are strong enough to fight it and rise above. Let that pencil replace that gun.

Cold World

We born to make mistakes
But never sin long
Another you in tha' world
You got a twin clone
That's why I'm tight wit' God
Relation been long
But when he tell me go right
I go left
So he draw me tha' picture
Tell me to see death
And so I sleep on that
And I bounce back
Get my hustle on right
So I could count stacks
But I was smothered by aliens
As a rug rat
Then my pockets got big
Got drug fat
Body numb off coke
Like where my brain at
Head hella' big like Wayne hat
I just couldn't fly right
Like a sick bird
Devil was in my skin
Like a fish burn
Know I gotta' wear glasses
When my wrist turn
But to keep it real solid
Bra It gotta quit
Snatchin' purses hittin' houses
I'm gonna be legit
Or I'm a be a bum rockin' Fila fits
Take it from lil' Jon Jon
You betta drive straight
Or you gon' starve in this world with a dry plate
Keep laughing at the clowns
Cause they lines fake
Tell 'em it's cold in this world
Don't let tha time waste
You gotta move- move mean
You gotta catch yon evil
'Cause we still God's children
When we done wit evil
But I'm still cold blooded
Rip Emit, Bin and Carl too
I know ya'll in heaven
And I'm thuggin' for my bras
Always in my veins

-Jon Jon

From The Beat: When you first started reading aloud on the unit, it was obvious how much talent you had. But now, your skills, your heart and also your struggles have grown by leaps and bounds. Keep it up, and as you struggle between the two pulls in your life, share that struggle with The Beat readers.

My Life: hard as hella

Life is hard when you grow up around a lot of things that you should have Not been around like drugs and guns. Life is hard when you have to be around it all the time. Life is hard when you think that you are going to do something in yo life But when you are around people that tell you that you are not going to be nothing in life.

-Devante

From The Beat: It sounds like it has been rough so far. Now as you become an adult you'll have more choice as to who and what you are around. Choose to put yourself around more positive people, in more positive situations. You are young, you can be what you want to in life, if you're willing to live that everyday and not give up.

Last Word

If I could of said something to my ninjas Bruce Bo or Active before they died I would of told them I love them... you ninjas was some real ninjas real active we all gone be together one day until then I love you ninjas you will never be forgotten rest in paradise.

-Young Boobie

From The Beat: We're sorry for the loss of your friends. If they could speak to you in a dream or from across the divide, what would they advise you now? How would they want you to live the rest of your life if they had all the time in the world to think about it, and they could see the big picture?

Me And My Cousins

One of the pictures I cherish the most is the one that me an my cousins took after we made the playoffs when we played for the San Leandro Crusaders.
I will never forget that day. Matter of fact, that picture is on my dresser right now, but then my mom probably moved it because she told me she cleaned my room up. So when I go home tomorrow on EM I will see if it's still there or not.

-Darren

From The Beat: Why is that your favorite picture? Is it because you made the playoffs and you accomplished something that you felt good about? What do you remember most about that day?

Something I Didn't Even Do

This is Lil' Indio from Livermore and I don't feel this weeks' paragraphs because I got so much stress Beat. Today's date is Feb./4/2009.
I would like to talk about how I was already suppose to go to camp, Beat... but I guess they try to put some other charges on me that I didn't even do Beat. But I guess the person that used to be cool with snitched on me, and no I didn't even do nothing.
Now everybody against me like my attorney. He's tryin' to tell me admit to the robbery charge and assault with a deadly weapon charge, which I didn't do and never will do.

I'm telling you Beat, I be praying all day everyday Beat to tell Allah to please forgive all of the sins I did and hopefully Allah would forgive me because everybody makes mistakes.

Also Beat, my hearing on the 10th if this month. Hopefully they really do drop the charges and hopefully still send me to camp. Hopefully even better than maybe release even though I don't think that going to happen, but you never know for sure.

I can't wait until get out Beat forreals. I know I been saying that but this time I'm real talk Beat when I get out. Hopefully soon beat I'm will have me a real good life like be on the down low, get a job, help around the house more often, kick it with the homies, stick with a female and just have a real good life.

I been in here for three months already and I know my time hasn't even started, but hopefully Allah will choose the best decision for me, give me another chance because I am a more wiser person since I've been in here.

Wells that's it Beat. To everyone locked up keep ya head up and keep it solid. Hopefully everything goes good. Thank you Allah.... I am a changed man.

- Lil' Indio

From The Beat: You really put your heart into this piece, and we can feel the struggle and stress in your words. While we all wait to find out how much time you get, we hope you also read and write and plan as much as you can... right now your focus is on getting out, but our biggest dream for you is that you manage to stay out.

Messed Up

What I want to write about today is my feelings and what I did to my dad. He took me in from the hall and I did some bad things to my dad that hurt me and him. I took two hundred and eighty dollars and he needed the money for food and I left.

I was gone for a one month's period of time and got caught by the police in a stolen car that I had took from somebody I didn't even know. And good thing they didn't press charges 'cause I would have went to the California Youth Authority and they could have charged me as an adult.

-Lil' Monsta
From The Beat: Yes in deed you messed up bad. Not only did you steal from your own dad, but you were acting a fool out on those streets. Not only hurting your dad, but hurting yourself. You're lucky that you didn't get charged and you should take that as a sign. You owe your dad an apology, plus 300 hundred dollars. Wake up, man! You're not always gonna get lucky like this in life. And as for your dad, you should treat him with a little more respect because there are a lot of kids out there that don't even have a dad to lean on.

...good thing they didn't press charges 'cause I would have went to the California Youth Authority and they could have charged me as an adult.

Damn

I'm in here once again for possession of a firearm, and a warrant. I get out this' place when I'm eighteen. I'm gone at least go to school for my high school diploma and try to be a more positive person and write in The Beat until I leave. That's all I got this week, 'till next week.

-Delinquent
From The Beat: We're glad you want to share your thoughts with The Beat while you're in here—and remember you don't need to write "positive" for us, especially if you are feeling negative. Just write your true feelings – with respect of course – and you'll discover that in your truth you discover your true self.

On My Mind

What's on my mind is I got a court date coming up and I'm doing my best so I can get out and I know I'm getting out. But I came 2 weeks ago and they was trying to let me out if I told them who it was and nobody didn't tell. So they had to drop the charge and then the car that we had the lady couldn't identify who took it. So they dropped that charge.

So the judge said wait till the 2-4-09 and then after my first court date he detained me. My lawyer and everyone said I'm getting out. So I must be going home and I'm not coming back. I'm bout to be successful in life so I can be something, not like other people on corners and stuff. I'm going to get my life straight and do what's going to take to make my momma proud of her son.

-Deaddrian
From The Beat: This is a very good piece of writing Deaddrian. We're glad to see that even though things might not be going your way, you still manage to stay positive. You have heart. You're a great example and if you stay positive and motivated, positive things will come and you will succeed.

What's Next

Man I'm still sittin' in this burnt out unit in this Alameda County Juvenile Hall and it's like I'm sittin' in here hella just tired and oh so irritated 'cause cats in here run they mouth but don't be 'bout no action.

My PO be tryin to play me and ship me off to foreign lands, and I'm getting news about some girl pregnant with my baby but I don't know who the female is but ya'll know I ain't never worried bout nothing really 'cause' I'm a do me regardless of the fact I ain't really got nothing to look forward to. Carl gone, bin-laden gone, so I'm just out here waiting to do the do. 'Cause ain't no toppin' me, Rest in peace Carl and bin Laden.

Gone but never forgotten. I love and miss y'all save a spot for me 'cause I'll be there real soon..

-Lil' Solid
From The Beat: Sure, let's hope that spot gets saved, but let's also hope it's multiple decades before you take it, because Donte you are needed right here, in this world. You're needed by your loved ones, and your own self!

Finally Getting Out!

What's up Beat? Today I am going to write about how firme it feels to be getting out this place. The frist thing I am going to do is go to my hood and kick it with my homies and my varrio(hood), besides spending a lil' time with my jefita(mom) and my familia.

So hopefully I get out of this place. And for all, stay firme(solid) and don't lose your hope.

-Ivan
From The Beat: We're glad to hear you say you want to spend time with your mom and your family but you also say that the first thing you want to do is go back to the block and kick it with the homies. We can understand that you're looking forward to getting out, but don't you also look forward to staying out. From the looks of it, you're just going back to the same things you were doing, and that's only gonna bring you right back.

That Picture Of My Family

I have a picture that is very valuable the picture has me, my dad, little brother, and my little sister. The reason this picture is valuable is because it has my Dad and my brother in it, and I haven't seen my dad and my sister and brother for over 5 years. That's why it's valuable.

-Francisco
From The Beat: That's a picture to treasure, but if you don't mind us asking why you haven't seen your family in so long? What has been holding back? Is it the system, or you? What's stopping you from reuniting with your family?

RIP Andrew

Damn this is dedicated to my godbrother-Andrew P.

Damn lil' brother I miss you man. After you and burger died, everything changed. Damn man I'm missin' you. I remember when we was all walking to that party and Burger was around the corner with the family, and some ninja's came through shootin' a chop.

Everyone ran except me. You told me to duck, and by the time I ducked I saw you hit. I was holding you, and then burger got out of the car and was trying to help but then you died, I love you boy.

I'm living the life until the death of me.

Rest In Peace, Lil' Drew, Burger, Tanika

-Clayton
From The Beat: You are the survivor. You're still standing, and even with the pain and loss you've experienced, we hope you feel the strength of knowing that you still have a chance. Will you step up and share some ideas on how to seize that chance?

One Day At A Time

The court system takes your freedom and fun and takes us away from loved ones. But there's no complaining because you put yourself in that situation. But you have to stay mentally and physically strong.

I live one day at a time because yesterday and tomorrow have no importance now, but the actions you do will affect your future. It gets harder and harder every day to stay happy and hopeful, but I go on and stay happy 'cause one day I'ma be out and have my life back.

-Nothin' But Time
From The Beat: When you do get out and have your life back — which will happen — what changes do you see in how you live so that you won't have to repeat this sad experience? We hope, as you live one day at a time, that you think about the days leading up to where you are so you can apply what you learn to the days that are coming.

Application

-D Boii
From The Beat: All we can do is publish our response, but not what you wrote, which is just a long piece about using your guns to blow people away. The Beat is just not going to promote that kind of nonsense that leads so many youngsters who don't know any better down a road that ends in a dead end, often literally! Put your talents to better use.

Stay Solid

Yeah man, what's up with The Beat? It's that young dude, E-Boy. Man, I ain't got too much to say 'cause I'm on this EMP thang, man, so stay up. Tell yo' wifey to hold it down. Keep that thang tight and we'll all be out soon. Don't let this little time degrade your pride.

Like Bugs Bunny, "That's all folks."

-E Boy
From The Beat: We're not sure why being on "this EMP thang" means you "ain't got too much to say." What's the connection?

Last Words

Well, Beat, this Young Dri. Well, me, I am leavin'. I'm going to Sacramento Trindy Program. Well, my sister, she need to know that bein' in here, it's not good. She can't do what she want. If she come in here, she's not going to be able to achieve her goal. I don't know, but my sis just needs to do right, take care of her son.

-Dri
From The Beat: We've never heard of the Trindy Program (could you mean Trinity?), so we hope you write to us from there and educate The Beat about what you find. We've benefited from your writing, so we look forward to more, from wherever you are. Your advice to your sister is exactly right. We hope she doesn't have to learn this lesson the hard way. Good luck.

Family Photo

I would take a picture of my family that I would carry in my heart forever, because I love my family, and I would always remember them with the picture. And I want a picture of my family that I always want to carry with me. What I cherish about that picture is that my family in that picture.

The story behind the picture is that when I was little, I took a picture with my mom and a picture with my dad and my sister and my other brother.

-Dude Guy
From The Beat: We hope that family picture inspires you to stop doing whatever it is that lets the system take you away from those you love. Where are they now? What do you want to do when you get back with them?

To The Editor

Dude, you be on yo' straight tweek mode on e'ry thang. I don't know what part of the world you grew up in, but I don't make threats, and college ain't neva gon' be used as a warning. I'm really tryin' to do shhh wit' myself. I'm an athlete an' football is my sport of choice. If you want, call Fairfield High an' ask 'bout #40.

Dexter's Laboratory is a cartoon on Cartoon Network, an' if I wanted to speak in code, why would I write it so somebody like you can try to judge me? You know nothin' 'bout me, where I've been, what I've done or nothin' ya dig? An' "Dunny" ain't a clique, it's a group of people who rap, so stop thinkin' you know e'rythang, and do yo' research. "Dunny" is jus' a made up word fo' homie.

-Cam Dunny
From The Beat: This Editor Dude is won over by your passion, Cam, and your willingness to stand up and say what's on your mind. (Some people call that "speaking truth to power" and we admire ourselves when we do it, so we also have to admire you when you do it.) We take your word for what "Dunny" means, but it's hard from our end to know why we see the same word appearing in different mouths, and it's easy for us to jump to the wrong conclusions. Thank you for your educating us. Finally, we don't need to telephone your high school to believe that you are an athlete with ambitions to go to college, and we apologize for questioning you to begin with. You have given us real insight into who you are through fine writing and thinker, and college is where you belong! We'll try our best not to judge you (without knowing you), and hope you give us the same courtesy and respect.

The Year 2009 — Still Here

What's up with The Beat? This is ya boy Isaiah still in this boosie facility going five and a half months doing dead time. But they said I may leave this week to going to Wyoming I hope so. They better keep their words with me or I'm getting active on staffs and cellmates. Lata.

-Isaiah
From The Beat: We understand the temptation to go off on someone when you're feeling frustrated, but one sign that you are growing up is that you are able to control those feelings. You can have them, just don't act on them. When you do go off on someone, who pays the price?

...there's no complaining because you put yourself in that situation. But you have to stay mentally and physically strong.

The Life Of A Soldier In Iraq

What's up with The Beat? It's the Young Life. If I was an Iraq soldier and I was ordered to kill anything moving, like young babies, dogs, families, farmers, school kids, I would if my family life was on the line or friends. But if it wasn't I'll go against the United States' people, for everybody can live they life. I'm going out like a soldier, ya heard me?

-Young J. Newt
From The Beat: What are the similarities and differences you imagine between your life and the life of a young soldier in Iraq or Afghanistan? We're interested in what you mean by "going out like a soldier." Why go out at all? Most soldiers in war return to civilian life and give up their soldier's life. Can you?

Awaiting Release

Man, ya'msayin'... Wha's up with The Beat, dawgie? Me, happy like the keyword is righteous... Ya'msayin'! I been in here for a minute or so for some otha type which the police wanted to pin on me 'cause I was with.... In the 'hood, dawgie. But I'm finsta touch down, back again as usual to cause Hell, but be smoother than a baby's bottom, like dawgie, wha's up... Ay to my lil' puppies, keep yo' heads up, ya'msayin' I'm out, dawgie!

-Jabba

From The Beat: We sure hope your little puppies don't listen to the advice of you, dawgie, 'cause this is the advice that led you right to where you are! Your promise to go "back again as usual," is like a promise for the system to react, again, as usual, not matter how smooth you or your bottom is!

To My Girl

Baby, I don't know how to explain to you how much I feel for you. When we talked on the phone the other day and you said you can't see yo'self wit' no one else, Baby, I feel the same 'bout chu. I just don't know how to explain to you. Yo' real ninja been hurt before and don't want a fake girl no more. I want chu.

I'm just scared to fall too hard, an' you end up leavin' scared, like the one before you. I love you, Baby. I'm sorry, but my trust takes time, although you'd be the foo' if you take it personal. So, Baby, take it slow, 'cause you got a year to wait anyway. I'm sorry, Baby. Don't forget how I feel. I love you.

-Lil' Unlucky

From The Beat: We hope you leave open the possibility that this may be love, but it may be something else. It's very hard to keep a loving relationship alive from long-distance — and you may find someone else when you're away that takes your breath away. We think the best line in this love letter is this: "...take it slow, 'cause you got a year to wait..." Good advice.

What's The Wishing For?

My life away from home is filled with perilous knots of regret. Why did I have to make the decision I made? But you feel me, at the time, the only thing I was thinking about is being a goon, a solja and ridin' for mine.

Was that the right decision when I think back? Naaaw but you feel me, I ain't gone write "I wish I had a time machine," or "I wish I could go back in time." Already know that's not a possibility, so what's the wishing for.

-Brandon

From The Beat: You're right; wishing to change the past is wasting a wish. But wishing to use the past to reshape the future, now that's something worthy of the time it takes to examine those regrets. As you look back, what plans are you making for your (much brighter) future?

It All Comes Back

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: You already know what we think of your remarkable skills, Grumpy. And you already know how much more tragic we find your dedication to a war you inherited is because of those skills. But we simply cannot keep allowing you to promote your gang dedication in our pages. So we've cut the piece and left this response as a warning to other who might be tempted to follow your lead and use The Beat to advocate more of the meaningless violence that is destroying generations of young people who deserve to live! We think of it as waste, waste, waste! At a time when your own community, not to mention our country and, in fact, the entire world we live in, is desperate for people who can think (as you can), can write (as you can), can lead others (as you can), you have chosen, instead, to follow. We are not just using words when we say this piece makes us weep — not for what you've written, but for what you will never write unless your thinking shifts into another gear altogether. It is divinely to be wished...

My Feeling For You

My feeling for you is making me go insane. I am feeling like I am in love with you, but I don't think so, as I go back and forth, back and forth.

My feeling for you is calling me, so I can be with you. My feeling makes me feel like I am in another world. Oops! I am thinking again. Damn, I am in love, so I feel like I am going insane. I love you.

-Jalissa

From The Beat: Love can make you feel insane sometimes. But you have to be careful, because we can feel all the feelings you describe many times about many people, so don't jump too fast. You may feel the same way about someone else later on, so take it slow.

Goin' Through It

Aye, Beat, I'm really goin' through it tonight. I've been waitin' on this interview to be accepted to this group home, and it turns out I had that interview today over the phone. It turned out to be not so inviting. Well, it's in Sacramento. The quickest I can possibly get home is ten months, an' I'm not feeling that. But I'm runnin' out of places to go, and if I run this time, I'm on my way to the Ranch up in Wyoming to shovel cow shhh for a year or two. God knows that's for surely not what I want.

I don't know what to do. I'm losing confidence an' feel like I'm setting myself up for failure. I don't want to run no more. It's time to face the music, yahhh dig? Baby, I love you, my Lil' Yucatan.

-Lil' Unlucky

From The Beat: You write that you don't know what to do, but it's pretty obvious that you do know what to do, which is to "face the music." Being grown sometimes means having to do what you don't want to do today so that you can do what you do want to do tomorrow. Running is a child's solution, and it never works. Ten months is a long time, especially for someone your age, but it's ten months, not ten years. You can do it!

Getting The Hell Out

People always talking 'bout when they get out they go do this and that. Some do the same shhh and expect different results, and wonder why they back. I say 'cause they insane in a way, and some time need to be here. They ain't built for this shhh. They need to do somethin' worth somethin', or just stop bein' a juvenile gangsta. Get out and make theyself useful. So this for the ninjas that come back and forth and say they did this and that and go do this. Just shut the hell up and go find yo'self, then claim yo'self.

-Rambo Bob

From The Beat: This is all very interesting about what "they" should do, but what about you? What should you do, and more important, what do you plan to do so that you don't have to be giving advice from behind walls.

The Life I Live

What up with The Beat? This be your boy, C Murks. Yes, I am up in this G-thang, holdin' it down. Yeah, I go to court on the 29th and I am praying I get out. This ain't the way I want to live, in and out of the Hall jails. I hope I go home.

If I was at home, I would be on the block. It is can as hell. I need to get out of this G-thang. When I do, I am going to get off paperwork, then I'm wildin'.

-Cenious

From The Beat: What, exactly, are you praying for? How do you think God hears a prayer that would put you back on the block with a deadly weapon designed to kill another of God's creations? What good will it do you to get off paperwork if you put yourself right back in the box?

Being Yourself, Dawgie

Man, wha's up with The Beat this week, ya'sayin? I mean, it's coo' to look up to somebody, but chu ain't gotta imitate they every move, ya'msayin' my lil' dawgie... Ya'msayin' I'ma do me and let that be that.

I don't act like nobody. I'm goofy when I wanna be, but cha know when it pop off...

-Jabba

From The Beat: You just keep doin' you, Jabba, and you'll be handing away larger and larger chunks of your life to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do and when to do it. (We had to take some of the nonsense, like the threat at the end...)

Owning A Car Dealership

I like cars because they are really fast and furious. I like sitting cars on 26-inch rims with beat in the trunk. In a couple of years I'm going to own my own dealership

-Spunk

From The Beat: What kind of cars would you like in your dealership? We hope the economy gets better, because right now, people aren't buying new cars and car dealerships are closing down!

It Ain't Right

Look at what we wear, we look like a mess Always kept my mouth closed with every case I catch I'm in my box counting every brick on the wall Doing otha ninjas' time inside of juvenile hall Wait until I get out, shhh ain't gonna be the same I gotta repent where I'm from and my last name I'm all about my money, use dollars as a napkin To wipe my sweat, don't ask any questions Where them ninjas, where they at? You wanna see, I'll be back

-Hunter

From The Beat: Your direct threat (which we removed) at the end of this piece makes us think you haven't learned much from "each case you catch." What is it you plan to "repent" if you also plan to take your revenge? As long as your life revolves around getting your money, you'll keep putting money in the pockets of your keepers. We know you don't believe us yet, but we hope you don't have to learn that hard lesson the hard way.

When I Leave...

When I'm leavin' I'm go smoke me a Mac-DRE and hug the Fam-Bam and everything, and tell friends and homies to stay up and be safe. I'm go say, "Speedy out," because that's what my mom say when she tells me to get out her room. And hug my nieces and play with them and my little sisters and my little cousins. And I would've told my dad and uncle to be smooth. And that's all from ya boy Speedy

-Speedy

From The Beat: Do you ever tell your mom to leave your room the same way she tells you to leave hers?

I Don't Cry

What'd poppin' with The Beat? This Hot Boi Jeez, man. My situation ain't nothing nice right now. They tryna throw ya boy a year or two in another state. But I did the crime, I could do the time. I'm just gone stay solid and do me fa real. Lots of boys'll cry. Not Jeez, I'm too solid.

-Jeez

From The Beat: Everybody cries at times, Jeez. Sometimes tears are the most appropriate reaction to what is happening in your life. We hope you are able to find the best out of whatever program they send you to, and that when you come back, you won't have to do more crime, so you won't have to do more time!

I'ma Beat The System

The system, it's playin' me like a tornado twista They giving me mo' time, they killin' me, sista I'm screamin' out, "Jesus, please help me bounce back and get on track"

I need to get to my family, 'cause they the only ones that understand me

We need each other like lions in packs

'Cause we don't take no BS

So I'ma beat the system like how my mom used to beat me

-Kirstin

From The Beat: We had to change up your poem, Kirstin, because we don't allow you to use The Beat to hate on anyone or single out someone else, or to communicate at all with another locked up here. But we left your poem in because we hope you do beat the system. But the only way to do that is not to play the game that leads here. We don't want you to beat it the way your mom beat you, because it should be obvious that violence against children doesn't make them strong, but only hurts them. Beat the system by rising above your past and changing your future.

They Playin' Me

I wanna go home ASAP. The system got me trapped, in and out of jail every otha month. A ninja can't even get an education. Wha's up with that? They be tryna play me and keep me in here longer. They also got me trapped mentally, because they messin' wit' my head. I be thinking I'ma never get out.

-Yours Truly

From The Beat: The terrible truth is that you are giving them all the ammunition they are using to play with your head. If you want an education — and we hope you do — stay in school. That means stop doing the things that lead you to feel trapped in a system that will always react the same way if you act the same way. It's not rocket science.

Three Topics In One

I would get freaky with my girl, tell grandma I love her and I'm sorry.

The picture is a picture of my mom that passed away during the summer. Look at it and remember it forever.

I am about to have court in a few days and I have the chance to get out. I'm in for two cases in the same black, so I don't know what to think. But I know I ain't ready to call this my home, and I figured that in the outs is better.

With an education you get a bigger profit then with selling weed. So I'm ready to change.

-Racoon

From The Beat: First, Racoon, The Beat wants you to write about just a single topic, not all three. When you write about all three, you really can't tell us very much about any of them. That's why we put all your topics together into this one, so we could publish all of it. But what we want to say is that your last sentence is the best of all. You are so right — it's better to be on the outs than locked up, and the best ticket for staying on the outs and living the life you want is to get your education. Don't forget.

It's Drainin' Me

Man, check this out yo! I'm hella bored up at this YGC thing. It's drainin' me out. It's makin' me lazy. I need to get out and active in a positive way. I can't keep being in here locked up.

-DowJones

From The Beat: We don't know how we would keep our minds active in a place like this, or what wed do to avoid the temptation to do nothing, which is always a temptation when everything is done for you. But you have a fertile and active mind, so we know you won't give in to this temptation for long. Best get out and get on with your life. You have a lot to look forward to.

What Is Love

Love has no limits. love has no due
It could last forever if you want it to
Love makes life feel so complete
But when someone steals your love away like a thief
It can't be felt in the heart
But it can be felt when you're apart
Love may make you do crazy things
Making love feel more real than it seems
But to me it means it's not over until the fat lady sings

-Luv Hurts
From The Beat: Love is that powerful emotion that can hurt so much at times, and wash away all hurt at others. Poets and writers have tried to describe it for thousands of years, but no one has ever succeeded.

So Much On My Mind

I really don't feel these topics tonight, but I really do have a lot on my mind, such as my court dates and life on the outs. I'm not sure if I'm getting out soon. I just found out that my favorite aunt has throat cancer, my grandma has kidney problems, my other aunt is in and out of the hospital because of her breathing problems. But good thing that my mother is healthy.

There is some other bad things such as my dad passed away when I was two years old. He went to the hospital for a normal check up and the doctors gave him two different shots. It turned into toxic poisoning and he died. But if you ask me, they murdered him in cold blood.

Enough about my life story.

-Jawbone
From The Beat: We can see there is a lot going on that is weighing you down. When you get out of here, we hope you find a way to stay out so you can give whatever help you can to your family members who need it. We're sorry about your father's death in the hospital, but we don't understand why you think he was deliberately killed there. What would be the hospital's motive for doing that?

Sexuality

It's hard out here, Beat. People judging me on my sexuality because I prefer to be gay. I grew up wit moms and got her habits of liking boys. Because I represent the gay 'hood, my self-esteem is low. I don't care though, I love me and it's who I am.

-Lil' Two-Man
From The Beat: We don't think your mother's liking boys had anything to do with your sexual preference. You are who you are, and even if she had liked other women, you would still be who you are. We have only admiration for you for knowing who you are and for your courageous willingness to stand up and be who you are, whatever others may say to you or about you! When you get out of here, you should see the movie, "Milk" It's a great movie (everybody should see it) that explores the revolution in the human right to be who you are, a revolution that started right here in San Francisco. Whatever you write next time, give us a longer piece that this. You have a lot you could say... Say it!

Beef

This ya boy Daddy-O. Man, what's good with The Beat?

Man, I'm speaking on this topic beef 'cause all these people out here be trying to beef, ya dig. Most of these people out here be beefing with no money. Man, how you go beef with no money. If you ain't got no money, you can't beef, 'cause if you ain't got no money, you can't even buy yo' own thang. How you go be on the block with somebody else thang. So for real you can't beef with no money.

-Daddy O
From The Beat: Great! You get money to buy your "thang" so you can beef. And where's that money going now? Is there anything else in life you're interested in besides beefing?

Last Words

If I had a chance to tell my loved one's something before I was to go, my words will be, "Stay strong . I love you and don't trip. I will be back. Time ain't nothin'. It all in yo' mind 'cause a ninja like me will bounce back. Love always your only,"

-Terrence
From The Beat: These are comforting words. We hope you never have to use them.

Hang In There

While I'm in this cold cell, I think about all the things I miss and missing. I feel so much regret and wanna go home. I'm wasting so much time in here, and I feel like my mind's playing tricks on me.

But what I learned from being in here a couple of times — you gotta look forward and keep ya head up, because if you keep thinking the worst, you just keep hurting yourself mentally. Just hang in here and you will be fine.

When you locked down in the cell, you shouldn't let all those memories you have from the outs get to you. If you do that, it will make things more stressful for yourself. What you should do is look forward and get yourself together. Think what you really want to do in life. Keep yourself occupied like workout, read a book or something you like to do.

-Ju
From The Beat: We put your two pieces together, Ju, because they gave the same good advice. But maybe it isn't working so well for you if you feel like your mind is playing tricks on you. Can you write a longer piece about that? Give us some examples of what you mean, and how you deal with it. When you think about what you really want to do in life, what do you come up with?

Keep My Name Out Y'all Mouths

Ya dig? This the Shotty Ninja. I'm comin' live and direct at y'all, so put ya 3-D glasses on. This jail-gangsta shhh gettin' real old, and I'm tired of they shhhh. My twin just went down fo' some bullhhh, but, ya dig, can't nothin' these crackers do to break a goon like me, ya heard? But, yeah, word 'round town Shotty G supposed to be touchin' down real soon. I guess y'all scared or y'all must realize Shotty G ain't playin', but whateva it is, y'all need to keep my name out y'all mouth.

-The Shotty Ninja
From The Beat: If Shotty G "ain't playin'," we hope he can open his eyes enough to see that the system "ain't playin'" either. They can take your life, for real, and put you in a box forever, if you give them the power to do it, even if you believe they can't break you. If you go after whoever has your name in their mouth, you're giving the system all it needs to control your life. Think hard before you find yourself in a situation where you're thinking "if only" from behind walls...

Ain't Scarin' Nothing

Yeah, man, it's that young Grimey. It's a new year and as you can see, I been doin' my thang out there wit' my ninjas and shhhh, tryin' to get that paper. That's why I'm in this thang right now, y'am sayin'? They 'bought ta send me to a grouper, but for all you clowns, stop actin' something you ain't and get on my hype. I'm holdin' it down for my 'hood while I'm in this G-thang, y'am sayin'?

-Grimey
From The Beat: At least you can see the link between going after that paper and handing away your freedom. The only "paper" you're getting now is going straight into the pockets of those who you've given control over your life. Might be time to rethink your lifestyle... It doesn't seem to be working for you.

He Gone Be Free

"Free ma ninja!" That's what my girl yellin'
"Free 'im fast, before I get to yellin'
That's ma baby, I love him to death
If you let him go, I keep him on point
He gone do better
He ain't gone smoke no' mo' joints
He gone be free"

-D-Smooth
From The Beat: It's nice to have a girl in your corner yelling for your freedom. But in the end, all the yelling in the world won't keep you free when you touch down. That's in your hands, not hers.

Stolen Heart

My heart once had been nothing but fiery coals
But I met this girl who's smile was gold
She had ten pretty toes, and she was smart
Sexy and confident, she somehow moved in and stole my heart
Only to bring it back with new meaning a heart that was once mean and cold
Is now loving and bold
But I just met her
And already I'm starting to love her
I don't understand how I can have such feelings especially since I barely know her
I never thought I would be in love
Without even feeling her touch
But somehow it seems like I knew her all my life
Maybe this was God who brought her into my life
We both have the same goals. We have so much in common that it's kind of scary
Maybe one day we will get married

-Loving And Bold
From The Beat: You didn't put your name on your piece, so we had to give you one. What you've written prove — again — that nobody knows the future and nobody can be certain that they will not change. This chance meeting has melted your heart, and that's a wonderful thing. We hope it works out the way you want it to.

Just Waiting

What's good with The Beat? It's ya boy, Young Tizzle, down here at the Ranch, waiting to get up out this place. I been waiting for a long time to go back home to my family. It's a lot I'm go' do when I get out. One thing... I ain't getting back into trouble. I'm 'bout to be eighteen. I've done a lot of time at a young age, but that's a lil' something on my mind this week. I'm gone.

-Tizzle
From The Beat: It's great that you're using your time at the Ranch to think hard about your life on the outs. Use the strengths and talents you know (and we know) you have to move your life beyond your troubled past. The streets are the same as when you came in, but you are different! Don't forget!

Forfeit The Game

Forfeit the game
Before somebody else take you out the frame
And put your name to shame
Cover up your face
You can't win this race
The phase is too fast
You just won't last!

-Can't Win
From The Beat: We had to change your Beat name because you only used numbers and letters, which we won't do. Does this poem mean that you want to give up the game and find something else to do? We hope so, because you're conclusion is correct: you can't win except by not playing in the first place.

Everybody Likes Me

I like money. I like cars. I like girls. And I like school.
Everybody is nice, so be like me 'cause I'm so icy. So stay cool and do yo' time see you later.

-D-Rolla
From The Beat: What's the value of writing like this, DR? All that it tells us is that you are too lazy to do the thinking that might lead to some real writing that really says something, teaches something. Time never comes back. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. So our advice: stop wasting it!

Some Topic Ideas For The Beat

I'm not feeling the topics tonight, so for another topic, how about "Life In The 'Hood"? "Living In The Street" and "Surviving In The Street"? But to live there, it is a very dangerous thing, a lively task to survive on these streets, ya know what I'm saying? One love, Beat. It's yo' boy, Young D.

-Young D
From The Beat: We appreciate your topic suggestions. Why don't you take one of them to write on, and give us a full page of your thoughts. These are not easy topics, because some of the things you might be tempted to write about may no be appropriate for The Beat. But we'd love to read what you have to say.

Karma

Daym, I never thought I would ever end up in the halls, but here I am. It's hella can up in this place. Right now, at this moment, I would probably be holdin' it down on the block with the big homies, but instead, I'm here, doing time. I got court tomorrow, an' from what I hear, they ain't tryna let me out fo' a minute.

Another thang that's a trip is I came in the same week my brother got out. Mayne, I wonder how my mom must feel. She must be dying inside. I know I am, but, hey, let's just say, "Karma's real."

-Miguel
From The Beat: When you think of your mom "dying inside," does it make you want to change anything about how you are living your life, so that you don't bring so much pain to her? Do you see a connection between "holdin' in down on the block with the big homies" and getting locked up? Can you serve the big homies on the block without leaving your mom in tears, "dying inside"?

My Life In Las Calles

What's up Beat? I don't feel the topic today, so I going to write about my life in las calles (the streets).

Bueno pues, my life in the streets was hella cool 'cause I meet new personas and cultura. I live my life al estilo pandillero (gangster style) 'cause I'm a pandillero and I start ripando mi barrio cuando (repping my 'hood when) I was first a teen. Bueno mi vida in the calles (My life in the streets) is always running de la jura (from the cops) and looking for enemies.

I'm in this stinking jail for murder, but I don't care do long time here 'cause I love mi barrio and I still firme.

Bueno Beat, I want to tell you that I like live my life always running from la jura 'cause that's the way I take. I read The Beat the people cry 'cause they are in jail. Forget that! I still down for mi barrio no matter what.

Bueno Beat, this vato is out.

-Duende
From The Beat: What a shame that you're having to learn English inside a jail! You're still a child, thinking like a child, and the real tragedy is that you will grow up behind walls, one day waking up to the fact that life and freedom are gifts not to be given away so easily! Maybe you like running from the cops, but you're not running from the cops now. Now they know where to find you 24/7. You have so very much to learn about life, Duende, as everyone your age — and really, everyone of any age — does. We don't know if you believe in god or not, but if you do, is this the life he created you for?

Untitled

Ice can be made to cash
Cash can be made into ice
Ice slowly kills
Cash can heal
Ice is cold
Cash can bring heat
Cash brings life
Ice brings death
Ice comes with tears
Cash comes with joy
So next time you buy ice
Don't forget
It doesn't come nice
Ice is everything
It's in the street
It's in the schools
It's even in your homes

-Cash

From The Beat: We agree that "ice brings death" if you mean meth. Speed kills for sure. But cash doesn't always bring life. How many people do you know who have lost their freedom or even their lives because of their pursuit of cash? (Do you know the poem by Robert Frost called "Fire and Ice"? It begins, "Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice..." You should read it.

Ghost

What it do man? It's ya boy Nick G coming from the hole, Ha ha ha what a joke! Well I just got done writing about that picture, but I think I'll drop some dope to let ya'll know I'm out this place in a few days!
Yeah I get out Sunday February 1st and I feel really good about it. I got a strong plan of what I'm gonna do once I get released.
I start at West Valley on the second, the day after I get out. And I'm gonna get a job. I'll start looking right away. I should be getting a car within a couple of months and I'm good after that. I'm just gonna focus on messing with hella girls and getting massive amounts of money the right way this time. Before, I was just robbing houses slanging dope and that fast money burns a hole in your pocket for real.
Anyways I'm out.

-Nick

From The Beat: Sounds like a good plan for you and your future. We hope you make it through this time Nick. Good luck and stay away from what can get you back in here. "Si se puede."

On My Mind

What's cracking Beat. What's up with all you guys? How ya'll doing out there.
Well as for me, I'm just chilling posted you know. Well, court went all bad. I'm about to lose Fitness and that's hella gay.
So by March I should start going to adult court. Who would've thought car jacking was that bad, but whatever, I brought it upon myself. I was tripping out 'cause I heard the YA's are getting shut down, but I'm not sure, so if that's the case I'll be here for 1 ½ until I turn 18 and then go to the pinta (pen).
Well Beat stay up. To all the gente (people) out there stay up, keep trucha, keep your friends and enemies close. Gone.

-Mc Eagle

From The Beat: Right! We all make mistakes that bring unwanted consequences. We hope you find the strength that you need to overcome your situation. Try your best to behave better and do your best to reduce your time sentence. Learn something out of this time that you will be here. Teach others.

Just Checking In

What a trip! Today I met somebody who knows someone I knew on the outs. I always get to thinking about old times when that happens.
Other than that Beat my brain is on freeze right now I am sitting here chopping it up. I got an idea for a topic though, what people think about gang enhancements.

-Geko

From The Beat: What do you think about gangs enhancements? We know one thing, it's dangerous charges, if you have to follow the right path, you should be ok.

Juvi

You see me slippin' on the night with the devil by my side. He tells me that I'm halfway dead because I refused to go back in this life of sin. Growing up as a warrior, I never fell down, but the devil still haunts me and will never stop.
I gotta keep on the down low, can't trust anyone except a few, but they're hardly around. I tell my sisters, "Everything's gonna be all right," when I'm living in Satan's territory. I try to be a Christian, but everyone think that I will never let Satan go.
I was a slave; I was a psychopath killa, still showing no fear. He scared to death; he's scared to look in the mirror. I'm a warrior. Got the world on my mind. They see me bouncing and there they go hatin'.
I had a lot of enemies, and now being in Juvi making it worse. The only way I know to get back out there where I lived in the sick side of town, creepin' in the night. I see you comin' down the block and don't know if you're ducking or gunning. Juvi lockdown coming straight from hell. I gotta be strong, so why do you keep playin' mind games?

-Moe Joe

From The Beat: There are two things we hope you concentrate on. First, you are trying to be a Christian. Just remember how much power for good that represents, and use that power to control that evil side you write about. And the second thing is that when someone or something is playing mind games with you, then remember it's in your mind. It's only real if you let it be real.

Q-Vo

Ey, what's up people? How you camaradas doing up in the Cali sun? Well hopefully, all the homies are keeping their heads up and ain't stressing about them jainitas. Por que como que esta pelado Q-no (That situation is kind of messed up, no?).
So what should I talk about today? Hmmm. Shhh, I don't know. I can't think right now. Oh yeah, I got something.
Well, I just wanted to say that I'm gonna miss Samantha and Dave 'cause I'm gonna be out by this place. I'm gonna be hitting county in March, so I'm not gonna be able to write on The Beat no more. Unless they send me a Beat over the county. Shhh, I know that would be firme 'cause I would like to stay in touch with you guys.
Well Beat, that's it for now. I'm gonna try to write some lyrics for the homies. Orale pues, much love to all out there. By the way I would like to stay Q-vo to my primo de mi barrio.

-Temper

From The Beat: It's not going to be the same without you in the workshops, Temper. We're going to miss you. But we sure don't have to miss your writing. You can write The Beat from the county (or wherever you are), and we will print what you write in the Beat Without section and send you a copy. Our address is on page 3 of every issue. We hope you follow through, because we don't want to lose touch with you, either. Good luck.

Good-Bye

Adios mi cielo (good-bye my angel), today I say goodbye
Good-bye forever for the rest of our lives
Just turn around blind, walk away mija
Don't look back
Cherish the moments that we used to have
I can no longer kiss your tears falling from your face
Until you win some sweet and proud
I would hold you all night kissing your forehead when you sleep
After you had a bad dream
No longer will it be me by your side cambia mis pensamientos
(My feelings are changed)
Se que estas arepentida
Pero mujer yo lo siento
(I know you regret it, but baby, I'm sorry)
I'm sorry I loved you pero you already had your chance
Took my love for granted
And lost it with this men
You never thought I would give my life for you
Just to make you smile when you were feeling sad and feeling low
You did this to yourself
If you would have let go of your pride
But now I'm gone, and I leave you with this letra
Of good bye...

-Temper

From The Beat: How sad this good-bye is, Temper. "Walk away and don't look back..." ohhhh, that hurts us to read it, so we can imagine how it hurts you to write it. Love that lifts us to the heavens can also cast us down to hell. We're sorry you've had to write this letter.

Last Words

Q-vole Beat? This is Lil' Casper once again just kicking back in the max. Today's topic is "Last Words." If I had to go out of town for a long time, the last person I would talk to it would be my jefita (mom) because I know how she loves me and cares about me. I would tell her that I have to leave town. I'm gonna be okay and that she doesn't have to worry about me.
Every time I leave the house without telling her where I'm going, she always calls me just to make sure I'm okay. Well this is all for today!

-Lil' Casper

From The Beat: We're sure that she would appreciate that you count on her in every single move that you make in your life. She will always worry about you because you're her son and she loves you so much. Don't you think your mother deserves more than a few words?

Sitting, Wondering, Waiting

Well, I sit in here and wait for my time to go by. I think about what's going on outside these walls. I wonder what my moms is doing.
I also wonder what my man is doing out there. He's on the run, playing games, saying all this stuff about me and him, and how he wants to have a family.
But then he ran away and since he's been out there, he hasn't written me or nothing, so it makes me question him.
But I hope he's cool and ain't doin' anything stupid. Well, to all, stay up.

-Lauren

From The Beat: We hope your guy faces his problems. Being on the run isn't a picnic. And we hope you'll have learned something important from your stay in juvy. We don't want you doing, as you say, "anything stupid", either. Time to get your act together!

This Is Shady

What's up Beat? This Ld. They tryna send me away for a long time. I'm gonna get a lawyer and beat the case.
Speaking from the max, this shhh is not fun and also Santa Clara County is shady. Santa Clara is one of the shadiest counties. But I'm gonna just keep my head up and hopefully get to go home.

-Ld

From The Beat: What makes Santa Clara one of the shadiest jail of all? Would you prefer to be locked up in a different juvenile hall detention or some other place worse? You got the key to your freedom. Pull it out from your pockets and let yourself free the next time you have that chance.

I Want To Be Completely Free

I like freedom
I don't like being locked up
I remember being young
I don't remember being old
I get mad when I'm wrong
I laugh when I'm right
I wish I wasn't alive
I want to be completely free
If only I was good
I am sad right now

-Cash

From The Beat: We can't believe that you wish you were not alive, Cash, because your wish for freedom is much stronger! Don't let your emotions at this minute lead you to believe you'll always feel this way. None of us is ever really "completely free" (we all have our pasts, our limitations, etc.), but you can be happy and free. Just don't give up.

Last Words

Wha's up Beat? I want to first give my love and respect to the homeboys. This, that homeboy G coming at you from the max unit.
If I left my country and I didn't get to say good-bye to someone I cherished, I would regret it. For instance, if I left and wasn't able to say something and then I got a chance to say something, I would tell her I love her and that I would always be there for her. I would tell her the reason I kept it to myself was 'cause I didn't want to feel like I was going to lose her.
That is what I would say if I wasn't able to say some last words to someone I cared about.

-Baby-G

From The Beat: Don't wait! If this is how you feel, tell her now because you never know what tomorrow might bring.

Almost Out

Hey what's up Beat! Well I'm just here chilling in this unit, waiting for my time to go home, finally. I haven't been home for a year, so I think it's finally time to go out there and do things right because I won't be coming back here anymore.
I'm planning on laying low for a while and just be kick back out there and get a job and try to help out the homeys and my girl you know, so I got to do something to keep myself from going next door so that's all I got inside me right now.
I just want to say to keep your head up to all.
-Grumpy
From The Beat: What are those "right things" that you are planning to do? How are you going to help your homeboys? Are you thinking of setting up a good example to them, so they can look up to you and start switching roads? Like you've said it is time to get out of here and never come back. You can live a different life if you like. It's your choice.

Ready To Get Out

Hey yo, it's me again, just chillin' like always. Another day goes by. Just look out the window, imagine me in the outs. I just can't take it anymore. I try to control my anger, but it's just every time I don't see my family I hit the wall, sometimes leave marks, but I try so hard to control it.

I've changed a lot about me, mostly everything now, just my looks now. I could really control my anger, it's just I think that my parents don't see me sometimes. I think they see me as a criminal. I know it ain't true, but I gotta keep the evil deeds out.

Well, gotta go. Catch ya later. Heads up.

-Moe Joe

From The Beat: So tell us, MJ, if you know that you are not a criminal, who are you? Who do you want to become? How will you get from where you are to where you want to go?

With Much Hate

The system treats me and my ninjas cold
When I heard what was about to happen my body was bout to fold
I used to be a boss and I used to be a playa
With a gwap in my pocket saying shut the fluff up hater
Grew up with hate for the 5-0
But now I'm contemplating
Man, they helping San Jose
And when I get out, I ain't doing no wrong
So I'm a say it now fluff the bad and I'm gone.

-Hollywood

From The Beat: You need to find a way to release all this hate you feel inside of you. This might be the problem that's keep bringing you back in here. If you won't do any wrong anymore, what will you be doing?

Watsonville

What's up Beat it's Elmo from Watsonville writing from the max. Well my PO told me I'm getting close to getting released to the YA Alternative in Nevada. So yeah I'm kind of happy for myself. But who knows I may not stay.

Yeah I'm going to miss my Watsonville.

-Elmo

From The Beat: You are given another chance to fix your mistakes, but it seems like you are not thinking in using it to your convenience. The way you think and the way you are planning things for your future will get you back in here and lose more than you've already lost. Wise up!

Happy Birthday Mom!

Mom, I'm sorry I couldn't be with you tomorrow, on your special day.

But I'll be sure to make it up to you whenever I get out of here.

I know we've had a lot of bumpy roads through the years, but through it all, my love for you has always been unconditional!

I know me being in here doesn't help you any, so I want to do better when I get out.

There are no words to explain how much I appreciate everything you've done for me. You inspire me a lot.

I've seen you grow so much throughout my life. Especially raising a child by yourself.

So mommy, I hope you have a good birthday tomorrow and try not to stress too much.

I love you with all my heart. Your daughter...

-Isabella

From The Beat: We send our best wishes to your mom on her birthday, too.

Thoughts On A Paper

"I'm not feeling these topics," seems like a cool topic. Shhh the outs is the same as I hear from the loved ones. And nobody I care about has died lately so it's cool.

I've been writing this jaina in the outs who I've known for a while. I never thought much of her other than a fine piece of girl that would always be around. Not that I'm locked up and looking at a life sentence, she still there, telling me she always gonna be there no matter what. And she knows my max, but she still jockin'! So I use it and take advantage of that. I tell her what she wants to hear and some.

I see it as money in my commissary in the future. But yet it hits me that all the females I was messing with ain't here. But she still is. That's a keeper. Shhh I might marry her when I hit prison, get a couple of conjugal visits, get her pregnant so I could have a son to carry my name. "Lil' Jon Jon,"

Simon! But my ex-lady started getting at me like that too in recent letters, so I guess, I'll choose whoever I feel the most, gonna stick with me, and make the cuter baby. Haha. I know it seems messed up, but shhh a homeboy gotta do what he has to do that he could benefit from. But yet again, these are just my thoughts written on a piece of paper.

-Jon Jon

From The Beat: Now you have someone who accepts your current situation and is willing to give you the support you need, and you are taking advantage of it. How do you feel about that? Then you're going to get her pregnant. For what? Just to carry your name? What kind of man are you? You're willing to have a child, without the warmth and the support of a father. This is wrong. Life is not a joke. Having a baby and not taking care of responsibility is not the way it goes. What are you or her going to tell her when, if you had one, he/she asks for his/her father is? How do you think he/she is going to feel when finding out the truth? So, think about it maturely!

I Know Where I'm Going

I went to court and they said that I am going to the Ranch. I am not so happy about that. I want to go home! Well, don't we all? It is so hard to be away from my life. I hurt because of what I have done to my mom. I cry myself to sleep at night. I have so much guilt and pain inside. But I'm on a happier trip now that I have a sentence. I know I'm leaving soon - just not where I want to be. Well, I got to go Beat.

-D

From The Beat: Try thinking about the ranch like this. There are people who pay big bucks to go to ranches and be told what to do. Of course they're called Dude Ranches, but still.... The ranch you're headed to will cost you some time, but if you listen carefully, and do what's asked of you, the payoff will be freedom. That's a pretty good deal.

To Kev

It's been about a year now. You ain't here now. I miss you little ninja. I shoulda been in your ear. That chick got you caught up... I shoulda went with you that night. I shoulda helped you fight that fight. Because of me you lost your life. Don't worry little bruh. I got you, though. You gone live through me.

This is dedicated to my lil' cousin. He was only 16 years old.

-Young Dash

From The Beat: We're so sorry for your loss, and another tragic death of a youngster who didn't need to die. But you are not responsible for him being gone. He made choices, just as we all make choices, and every choice we make, and every choice we don't make, carries consequences. Sometimes, those consequences last forever. Nothing you can do will undo that, so we hope you don't do anything to risk your own life or freedom so that Kev can, indeed, live through you.

Keepin' It Cool

What's up Beat? How ya doin'? Me, just keeping my head down always because it's the first time in here in Juvi. I'm kind of sad because my lady locked me in here because her mom forced her to. But it's all cool. I know one day I'ma get out and I'm just gonna keep it cool.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: And when that day comes when you get out, what are you thinking about doing so that you will not only stay out, but succeed and grow?

Good News, Bad News

Check this out Beat. This yo' boy Dre. They got yo' boy in the max right now because I'm 18. But anyways, there some good news and some bad news. Your boy beat a strike because my attorney blessed the DA with some game, and yo' boy got lucky. But anyways, the bad news... Yo' boy got life skills, a 180 days and now time served, and I been here for five months.

- Young Nasty

From The Beat: Well, whatever time you have to serve, it beats getting a strike, so let this be your chance to figure out how to do your time, get out, and never come back (or go to anyplace even worse)!

One Day

You say you want change
But will it take away all this pain
And get me through the rain?
Sittin' in this cell goin' insane
With one face flashing through my brain,
Watching these eyes of mine drain.
Thoughts rooming through my mind -
But that answer,
Why is it so hard to find?
So you say you want the truth.
Alright, hold on, this'll be a bumby ride!
Since age twelve I been on my grind.
Ain't too many people in these streets kind!
All they do is express what's on my mind.
Ain't nobody take the time
To learn about this shhh. that's one of a kind.
Too many people are just blind!
Now I'm 'bout to switch this up.
Baby, this is for you Butter Cup.
Dry your eyes.
No need for all your cries.
I know I ain't there right now -
But baby just be patient.
I promise we'll make it.
Each day that passes by
Makes me want to cry.
Please baby, don't say good bye!
To me, time seems to go by so slow.
But just thinking about
All the good times that are soon to come
Makes this face of mine glow!
So please, Tabitha, don't go!
I promise when I get out
We'll get this show on the road.
I love with all my heart & soul.
I never want to let you go.
Please baby, tell me you won't go!

-Stormee

From The Beat: Every now and then we get a love poem that makes us back off of our reluctance to print love poems in The Beat. And this is one of them. You're a real word slinger, Stormee. We would like to hear a bit more about your life on the streets. Maybe next time. And we'd especially like to know what you've learned.

That Picture, My Ninjas

What it do Beat Within? It's Nick coming at you from this so called max unit here tonight to talk to you about that picture that means hella much to me.

Well, that picture is of me and my ninjas on the beach out there in Santa Cruz just, posted posing and ya boy looks hella sexy flexing on these ninjas, haha.

Yeah that was my boy Kraig's birthday. We had a fat few day parlay at a campsite just on the coast man. There was a cliff and then below was the beach and we had a keg, tents, grapes, but most important all the homeys.

My lady was in rehab for that, so I couldn't bring her, but you know I had to get some, so I brought her older sister like a sav! Lol.

But yeah man that was one of the best weekends I've ever had, but really though what makes the picture special to ya boy is how I got it. Everyone always says, "Your homeys got you here and now where are they? Do they write? Do they visit?" Well yeah two of my boys and my homegirl slid through and tried to visit, but staff wouldn't let 'em in. So they dropped off a book, some cards, and that picture. I'm out man stay up ...

-Nick

From The Beat: It sounds like you had a good time. Well, we hope your girl doesn't get a hold of this piece and find out about her sister. Thank you for sharing the experience with us.

Hard Times

These are my hard times right now. I got myself locked up and can't see the people I love. I fudged up and got myself caught. I should've gone home that night. I didn't though. Instead, I decided to chill with the homies and because I did, I got caught and now I'm here.

Most of my homies tell me to stay low "lay low" and I never listen. I'm always being a mentirosa (dummy) and doing bad shhh, 'cause I usually don't get caught. Now I know my homies are just looking out. Man, sometimes I wish I would've layed low, but that's my plan when I get out. I'm going to do good. I really miss my family and that hurts a lot, especially my mom, and my street family too, like my brother L. I wish he would just do good, but that's really being hypocritical, 'cause I'm in here too. But I'm just trying to be good so I can finish my program and be free, and out this system. Well, I'm out - lates.

-C

From The Beat: We hope you're sorry for more than just getting caught. The sure way to not get caught is to not do anything you can get caught for. It's an old question, but we must ask you - what's your freedom worth? Sounds like your friends were trying to save you from a lot of trouble. Those are friends worth keeping, and worth listening to.

Violence

Where do I think violence comes from... Well, what I think is that violence comes from people. I think it comes from people because usually people think that by making someone else hurt inside, or by hurting them in some way, they will feel better. So, they start doing all kinds of things to innocent people. Then when someone finds out they did something to a friend of theirs, they go after that person, and that causes all kinds of violence. Well, that's what I think about violence.

-Irene

From The Beat: You've described the endless cycle that violence often creates. At some point, someone has to say - "No". Someone has to say no more violence, and mean it, as evidenced by her behavior, or his. That person could be you. It could be any of us. When enough of us say "No" to violence, it will become the exception in our lives, and not the commonplace. Are you ready?

Imitating Violence

I don't think someone can be born violent. I believe that they get it from who they live with, or whoever, but that no one is born violent. People imitate what they see.

-Irene
From The Beat: We agree with you. At the same time, we believe that any of us are capable of violence. We can choose to be peaceful or we can choose violence. If we grow up around it, or with it, in our families, the odds are greater that we may resort to it ourselves. And clearly, that's not good. So, teach your children well, and choose your friends well. Don't pass violence on to those around you.

Hard Times
These are my hard times right now. I'm back once again, up in here.
I'm hella missing my baby right now.
I just want to hold him in my arms.
Look into his eyes and tell him "I love you baby!"
Man, it bring tears to my eyes just thinking about my husband and my son (little cousin). I look at their pictures. I miss when I would be cooking for my son and my husband would just sit at the table, with him talking.
I hella miss those days, but I know I will get out soon.
Well baby, if you ever get to read this, know that your wife is keeping her head up and staying out of all this wack drama.
Also, baby I want to write a little part of a song to you.
It's by Selena it goes like this:

"I'm missing my baby"
"I'm missing my baby"
I want to hold you tight and never let you out of my sight
I'm missing my baby
I'm missing my baby
I need to feel your heart- beat next to mine
Got to hold you
Got to have you
Got to have your loving
And tell you that I love you
And I really miss you!
Well baby I hope you like it. To everybody God Bless and take care.

-Lugo
From The Beat: Whatever you were doing that caused you to be separated from your family - was it worth it? If it takes help to stop whatever it was, ask for help. Your family needs you and you need your family.

Bad News

Today I want to talk about how I've been feeling this whole time I've been here.
It seems like all I am hearing is bad news. All my patna's in here are hearing bad news. It seems like the D.A. and the judge don't want to send no sunshine our way. It seems like they let certain people off with shhh but others they don't.
Some girls is getting dumb lucky with their court dates, shhh, I wish I was going to juvenile court but I pray for all of us. I wish I could stop stressing off this shhh. It's not only my case I'm stressin' off of it's also my buddies. Don't worry, friends, we are all going to get through it. Only the strong survive.

-Faith
From The Beat: Wow, your friends are so lucky to have you in their corner. We know that the environment your in is a big cause for stressing out but when you have friends or family locked up along side you then the stress becomes paramount. Just keep your head up and try talking with your friend as much as you can, it might not take away all the stress but it might help somewhat.

Messed Up Case

What's up, Beat? This is Droopy. Well, I'm gonna write about my case. Like two weeks ago I went to court and my PO is trying to do me over and send me to the Y, but the judge is being cool but the scandalous thing about the story is the Ranch orientation guy came and screened me for the Ranch and said I was gonna be leaving to the Ranch by early February so I thought I was gonna be leaving then I got sent to this unit for like two weeks then it came out that they got confused with my case and somebody else's.

-Droopy
From The Beat: It must have been so frustrating to think that you're making progress with your case and then something like this happens! What now? We hope that they get it right!

You Didn't Plan To.....

As I'm here writing this,
Thoughts in my head come to me
With all the pain you caused
And all the tears I shed
Sitting, wondering, reminiscing on my bed!
Questioning myself, what have I done wrong?
But slowly understanding as this poem comes along...
My tears aren't out of frustration and hate
Because I know you didn't plan to make a mistake!
But as they roll down my eyes
And I slowly start to cry,
I convince myself you're my soul mate
And all this is happening because of fate...!
These emotional feelings that work up inside me
When my eyes get watery
And I need you beside me
To pick me up when I'm down
Or to make me laugh when I frown
I always want you to be there
And promise to try and never let me down!

It's slowly coming together as I speak my mind
But listen to me please just this one time...!

As I cry in your arms
And you hold me so tight
Whispering in my ear telling me every things alright
I feel safe, protected as if away from all harm
Just with the touch of me in your arms...

When I look into your eyes or send you love letters
Telling you I miss you and things will get better...!
When I say I love you
And I'll always be true
Or when you just hold me at night
Taking in all the pain I went through

The thoughts of it only being us two
There's nothing in the world I'd prefer
Then to just be with you!!
But as this poem comes to an end
And I reread everything in my head
I realize it's not only me making mistakes
But you to make them again and again!!

-Tenesha
From The Beat: Tenesha - we think you should send this directly to your sweetheart. We want to print what you have to say to the thousands of Beat readers, not what you have to say to just one person. We'll make this one exception for you, because you put so much effort into it. But next time, write something to all of us.

My Lil' Son

Hey Beat, what's up? Me nothing just sitting here in my unit and just want to drop a few lines about my son. Well anyways, my son is 8 and a half months and he already has six teeth and two on the bottom.

Well, I am sad because today I had court and saw my mom and she was telling me all the things about my son and I was like damn, I wish I was out to see him do all the these things and for him to be only 8 months he is pretty smart because he already knows how to crawl and stands next to the coffee table and he drinks out of a sippy cup and eating regular table foods.

Well his b-day is on May 8, 2008 at 5:52

-Mommy loves you son.
From The Beat: It's amazing how fast kids grow, isn't it? One morning they're not even crawling and another they're asking if they can go on a date! How do you handle being away from him at such a young age? What do you do, if at all, to ensure that your baby boy knows who his mommy is while you're gone? We wish you the best, and we hope you're reunited with your son!

I Love My Baby

Today I saw my baby boy. I cried when I saw him because I hadn't seen him for a whole month. Every night I pray to God for him and that God will hopefully let me out so I can see his first birthday. My son is my life. I don't know what I'd do without him. I love my baby boy Jr.

-La Foolish
From The Beat: We wish you the best, Foolish, and we hope that you're able to get out to see your son's birthday too. Has this incarceration made you want to do things differently in your life? Hope so.

The Beat Within

What's good with it tonight, Beat? Man, I been struggling a lot lately, I got like four more months in this place but it's cool though, I try to look on the bright side of living this B.S. life. I just wanted to say every time a homey gets out from jail, another falls into the game. Man, I know that a lot of my soldiers feeling the same way that ya boy feeling.

It's also hard because there is a lot of my soldiers in here and in county and pen doing time. But anyways, I just wanted to say that life is a game and to all my fallen soldiers keep ya head high and stand tall and never fall and if ya do get back up and keep on going till you rest. But in the mean time ya boy is out living this b-s life.

-Tanks
From The Beat: What do you mean by b-s life, Tanks? Is it life in general that is b-s. or life in the halls? Is it because you think life's a game that makes it b-s? Living your life in the game is dangerous and the only thing that's b-s is THE GAME. Why not live your life like it's your life, something to cherish and respect?

The Beat Without Writers

I wanna give big props to all the people who write in the BWO, I think that all the writings are so inspiring and I look forward to reading them every week.

I would like to hear from the Beat Without writers more often, see what the regulators have to say, give some knowledge to these youngsters 'cause there so many of us who are off track and ain't living our lives right.

I see so much false acts these days, I'm 16 myself, but I know what's good.

-Pretty
From The Beat: We know that the men and women who contribute to the BWO will be so happy to read this and know that their work is appreciated. Tell us what's good, since you know!!

Dreaming casually

Once in a while, just once in a while,
I wish you would come back to me and tell me what you'd like to be.
Would you like to be rich and famous?
Sure, no one else could blame us for dreaming casually.
Once in a while I wish our cares would drift into space,
We can always find a time and a place,
Maybe Saturn or maybe Mars,
The both of us just searching the stars,
While I am dreaming casually.
When I want you in my arms,
When I want you and all your charms,
Whenever I want you all I have to do is dream.
I can stare into your eyes,
Taste those lips of wine, anytime night or day.
Only problem is gee-whiz I 'am dreaming my life away.
I need you so, all the time
I need you so that I can die,
Whenever I want you all I have to do is dream.

-Joanna
From The Beat: This is a pretty song, Joanna, where did you hear it? Did your mother or father listen to this a lot when you were growing up?

Back In The Hall

What's cracking, Beat? It's Ricky. Well Beat, I'm not feeling the topics tonight so I'm gonna write about how I'm back in the system.

Well, I failed aftercare for blowing trees. And so now I'm back in paradise again. My PO is trying to give me Advent Group Home for three months. It's whatever though, if I could do ranch then I could do three months. I'm gonna handle my time and get out back to the familia and the jaina.

Well my homie gets out tomorrow. I wish him luck. Well as for me I'm just gonna wait until my court date. Until then, I'll keep my head up like my nose is bleeding. This homeboy's gone. Alrato.

-Lil' Man
From The Beat: It sounds like your RO. is trying to help you out, get you out of the Hall. You say you'll be able to do three months, but remember how you got sent back here. Don't mess up and do anything stupid, and you'll be back with the people you wanna be with.

That Kissing Picture

That one picture I will always keep in my mind was when my man and me were kissing. The picture was taken on my phone and my other picture that was taken on the phone was when I took a picture of him laying down and you could see all his tats and his muscular body. Damn, don't I really miss that.

-Pretty
From The Beat: He sounds like a great guy. Do you and your man write to each other often? What do you do to keep your relationship alive while you're gone?

Mixed Feelings

Well, the other day I ran into my ex vato. I felt happy but then angry at the same time because I love him but he did me wrong so I hate him because of that. I just don't want to love him anymore because I know he doesn't love me back.

-La Foolish
From The Beat: Hate is a strong word to use, Foolish. Do you think you would ever try to reconcile your relationship with him? How do you know that this vato doesn't love you anymore? You'll never know unless you try talking to him.

Today At Court

Well, today I went to my court day. I was waiting with my jefta in the court waiting room. While I was sitting there waiting to be called in to court, in my mind my thoughts were going crazy. Thinking that I was going to get out JHall but once I stepped in the courtroom.

There I was sitting in front of the judge, telling me that I am going to stay here two more weeks, until my PO comes back from her vacation, to see what programs I could get into. Since the point I heard that, I was mad because I have to stay here and see my mom is really sick and my PO knowing that she is does what she does.

My mom needs me at home. I been here and she knows that my mom might be gone the next day and what could I do? Nothing, 'cause I am in here the one thing that I could do is just go crazy.

-Bakon
From The Beat: Your PO has a life outside of her work so this vacation might have been planned ahead of time, thgouh, we bet it must have been so frustrating for you to find out that it was going to be another 2 weeks before you could find out the programs available for you. When she gets back, work with her and tell her your situation. Communicating with your PO is crucial, otherwise she won't know what's going on.

The Thanksgiving Picture

What's up Beat? I'm going to write about a picture I remember, it's a pretty good memory.

One day on Thanksgiving I had a bunch of family and a couple of friends over and we hella ate, listened to music, and had a cool time. We had someone take pictures of everyone that was there and that picture just brings back good memories.

-Marlene
From The Beat: It sounds like you had a great time that day, Marlene. Do you do the same thing every Thanksgiving?

Entering Adulthood

Dear Beat,

Well Beat, I'm not really feeling this topic so I'm just going to write what I got in my mind. Well, I got like 23 days left, you know it's not that long. Well, I really kind of like being in here. For real, I been getting locked up ever since I've been young and now that I'm older and I get released to the streets I start doing the same things like looking forward to smoking weed and not think to myself that I got a problem with drugs.

But I'm getting really old, I guess you can say not really just entering the stage of adulthood and I'm building my mind strong with the right tools so when I get out I can stay away of any negative decision making. If you're probably wondering why I would like being in here, because it takes me away from the real world for a second and I'm able to really think what is going on.

Well Beat, now what I'm looking forward to is getting released and having my girl pay off my restitution so I can get off probation and just work with my mom and brother cleaning houses till I'm able to find a real job and stay sober, go to school, and maybe just move far away to a place where there ain't no negative activities and I'll just be able to live a peaceful life and maybe have a family.

Well Beat, hope you like this piece 'till pen meets paper, till next time bye.

-S
From The Beat: The road to change is hard, we know that it won't be easy but if you really want this for yourself then we know you'll succeed! What will you do to keep yourself from falling back to your old ways of smoking and drinking?

That picture

The picture I will carry every were I go in my heart would be a picture of my mom and dad, my two sisters, my brother, me, and my little niece.

I would carry that picture around with me in my heart because those are the most important people in my life and always will be.

Well Beat, that is the picture I am going to carry around my heart.

-Miranda
From The Beat: Sounds like a beautiful picture.

I Still Love Her!

Well, this girl I met throughout the worst people I know. The guy that got me into twistin' that pizzle, he brought over some girl once. Damn! Drama! That's what I was thinking but I said what's up to her, introduced myself, I couldn't judge her without knowing. She was on the run. She smoked and that idiot got her into smoking, kind of like me except I was just a runaway. We got along right away.

We lived in the same house for a couple of weeks and we had so much in common! One night we got all gaked and just went in the walk-in closet from our friends room away from all the guys and just wrote... wrote... wrote! Then we started talking. She read what she wrote, what she wrote made me tear up! I looked at her and she was crying too! We just talked and talked. I told her things I never could tell nobody, she told me some things that she also said she hadn't told anybody. Yeah, we lived together, we parted together but we never talked about us, the way we felt, we just kicked it. She was hella firme though.

Tweakers, they are some crazy people. So one day I had told her we were going to visit her mom and we were but I wanted to see mine too and then we could fix ourselves hella nice to go see her mom but I just told her let's go to my house and I guess she took it in the way that I didn't want to go with her anymore. She just told me so many things and I got so mad, I just grabbed all my things. We had left my shoes at someone's house, I don't remember whose, and I had her slippers and she made me take them off so I was about to walk barefoot! I got even more mad! Then she tells me "let me borrow your make up?" I just got heated, walked out, and slammed the door! She yells out the window some tweaker status things, that she was going to beat me up when she seen me out in the streets! I couldn't believe it!

Now it just seems like the stupidest thing to me! I saw her like a sister and methamphetamine tore us apart? Nah, from the bottom of my heart I knew if we talked it over we would forget about it. Nope, I was kicking it and she shows up...she wanted to box! I stood face to face with her, yeah, they held us back but I know if she really wanted to she would break free and throw the first punch...she didn't! I don't know her side to this, I never talked to her about why exactly she got mad but I still love her!

If she ever wanted to talk or needed anything I would be there with open arms! Crystal meth isn't going to be a reason for me to be mad at her!

-Blank
From The Beat: Even though your friendship hit a rough patch (probably helped along by the meth) you still loved her through it all. You are a true friend, Blank, and we hope that one day you two will be able to patch up your relationship. Would you be the one to ever initiate the mending of your friendship? Do you think you'll wait until she comes to you? What about meth? How are you sobering up and living a drug free life? Is it possible?

My Freaky Funny Picture

Que-vole, this your Home Girl. Today I'm actually feeling one of these topics. In this picture, me and my sister's got out of my swimming pool, I thought I was all covered up and everything when me and my sister's were posing for a picture then my brother took the picture.

A couple of week's later my mom finally noticed that my snatch was all showing. That was freaking embarrassing but freaking funny at the same time.

-Home Girl
From The Beat: This is a really funny story, Home Girl! Do you ever tell this story at parties or as an icebreaker if you're meeting someone new? What about that brother of yours! We'd keep him away from the camera.

Last Words

What's cracking Beat readers? It's the homey Shrek up in the max unit. Anyways moving on. If I was to leave for hella years without a word, I would write Wyno how much I love him and miss him.

I would also tell him that I'm sorry for just leaving him out there on his own without his carnal by his side. But that would never happen unless I'm locked up like right now.

Well I'm out.

-Shrek
From The Beat: What about helping your brother out from the wrong? If you really love him so much, why don't you show him the right way to live a life? He needs more than just being on his side.

What Am I to Do?

Hey, I'm locked up and I'm losing my mind. I'm looking at the walls and I'm thinking to myself," What am I to do?" Time goes by and time is money and I'm losing money.

-Montey
From The Beat: How do you get your money, legitimately or illegally? Does money give you the motivation to do good and stay out of the halls or set you up to fall?

Broken Heart

I hate you
But I loved you
You were my everything
Now you are my enemy
I thought I could trust you
But that goes to show you can't trust no one
You had a mask all this time
I just hope you're happy for what you've done
Next time I fall in love
There'll be a snowball fight in hell
You left me to die
But I'm still alive
But let me tell you something
Payback's karma, then you die
I should have listened
But I believed your lies
Not the DA or the cops
Could break me
You broke my heart
The day you came alive

-Cash
From The Beat: Unfortunately, this sad love-lost poem describes something that many of us have experienced in our lives. When it happens, it always feels like the end of the world, the worst thing we can imagine. But time has a great ability to mend broken hearts, and we believe yours, too, will come back to life and find another to put your trust in.

The Good Days

What's good, Beat? This Travieso. I ain't feeling the topics today so I'm just gone write 'bout the good days.

The good days to me were when me and a few homeys were just kicking it everyday drinking with no worries. We were just a few kids up to no good.

Sometimes we would do things when we were drunk for no reason, like one day, me, Raskal and Gumbie, were at the light rail station and Raskal tried to pick a fight with a random white guy and he almost got beat up. The guy just grabbed him by his throat so me and Gumbie jumped in. We got him pretty bad and this was all for no reason but it was still pretty fun.

In my room me and my roommate just tell a bunch of stories 'bout the good ol' days and laugh. To all locked down, stay up.

-Travieso
From The Beat: What makes fighting so fun? Your friend might've not gotten beat up if he didn't pick a fight with that man and then you and your friend wouldn't have had to jump in. Random violence is just that, random. It's unnecessary and you guys could have been doing something constructive with your time. Now is the time to think about what you want because it seems like you are highly influenced by what your friends want.

Words

Hi Beat! Jacki back again. Ugh. Ok, I'm most likely leaving soon, so this may be my final one.

Well the topic is 'words'. My words are a lot worse sometimes, than I mean them to be. I don't want to say them, sometimes, but I'm working on it. But I can get a lot out with my words. And I've had hurtful things said to me. I really don't know what else to say. So, yeah - bye Beat!

-Jacki
From The Beat: Getting a lot out with your words - yes. That's why we exist. We're here so you can use your pencil instead of your fists. And when you write what you want to say, it gives you time to find the right words, which sometimes is difficult to do when all you have is your tongue. Here's to the power of the written word.

Violence

Violence comes from anger in your family, violence is in your blood.
People killing people,
little kids getting stuck.
Hating red like a bull,
hating blue like a lie,
that's not true.
Things are not crazy in the world;
the world is crazy for the things
violent people take over.
Nonviolent people let themselves get walked all over.
Until nonviolent people take a stand and unite,
walk all over the violence and don't let it be a crime.

-F
From The Beat: We hope that the people who are fed up with all of the crimes going on in our cities and who are tired of our youth getting sucked into the system will read this and think of something positive to help change our cities for the better!

Thanks Mom

I want to thank my mom for always being there for me. I am very thankful for having a good mom. Well I just wanted to write about what was on my mind.

-Mark
From The Beat: That's a good thing for a son to say. Be sure you tell her in person, too, or show her this issue of The Beat. She'll be proud to read what you've written.

Sat Times

I want to talk about my court day and the outside. In all my court days that I had they just made my parents sad. I don't like that because they tell me that I'ma go out but I haven't seen nothing and my mom tells me nothing but bad news.

People talking shhh about me and a lot a stuff that makes me mad, that's why I am not tripping if I am here 'cause I'm not missing nothing in the world but hate and enemies out there. The only things that I am missing are drugs and girls are fun.

-Toker

From The Beat: There is so much more to living than drugs and girls! Isn't there anything you worth keeping yourself out of jail for? Like your mother or father? You're young, so it's hard to see past now but in the future things won't be so easy. County is a lot different from the halls and there are worse things done than someone talking shhh behind your back.

Locked up

Well I'm not feeling the topics today so I'm just gonna write down something that I wrote in a single cell: I'm feelin' like I'm locked up in a single cell casket. I want to break out, but I don't want to chance it. I can't go to sleep because my mind wanders deep. All I could do is peep, out the window of my cell. Wondering when I'll get my mail. This is going out to all in jail. Keep your head up and eyes on the prize. Keep working out to build up size. Smile now and save the cries for later.

-Vato L

From The Beat: We can understand the desire to break out, but you're smart to not want to chance it. The consequences would be far worse than what you're going through now. Keep your head up and you'll be done with your time without adding more too it.

My Lady

Girl you're beautiful
I been waiting to hold you again
You're so fine you blow my mind
And a girl like you is hard to find yo te amo.
I love you so much you're my life
And without you my life is nothing
You mean everything to me mi amor
You and me are meant to be together for all eternity
I love you valentinaco todo mi crazon
And one day I will make you my wife
'Cause loving me is a way of life
You are my baby girl
You're my baby girl
You are my baby girl
Valentina para siempre.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: This is a sweet poem! Did you ever send it to the special girl you wrote it for?

Appearance

What's up Beat? Today I'm gonna talk about appearance. I hate when people judge you about your appearance.

Like when I had long hair my PO told me to cut it 'cause of my gang probation and supposedly it was gang related. But now I'm bald and growing it out again and I don't care about nothing and ain't letting no one judge me!

-Baby G

From The Beat: No one will know who you are inside just from looking at you on the outs. But when you are in the system, you have to abide to the rules

Consider Yourself Lucky

Aye what's good, Beat? Me, just chillin' up in this baby jail. Well, today Ima write on the topic "I'm not feeling the topics tonight". So I'ma just write what's on my name.

What's on my mind today is jail. Obviously this is on my mind 'cause I'm sitting in here while I'm writing this. But also because there's a little something I wanna say. I'm going to be sent to Wyoming within the next couple of months, although I'm going to be locked up for well over a year altogether, I consider myself lucky. The reason I say that, is because I got a lot of homies doing life, or close to life. I also got a lot of homies in the max units doing a coo' minute.

So to all getting ranches, alternatives, group homes, etc...consider yourself lucky. To all in here, do your time and think about others in worse predicaments.

-Tarvieso

From The Beat: This is so true, Tarvieso. There are so many kids out there getting placed in group homes or Ranch and they run instead of doing their time! There are kids facing life and they would gladly trade places to go to the Ranch and change but they can't. We hope that The Beat readers who read this piece listen up because running is not the answer. Running from your time only gets you more time, so what's the point!?

Cell Phone Equaled Trouble

I remember that time when I was a young teen. My mom bought me cell phone and that's when all the contraband started. I was a dumb little kid involved with drug dealers and girls. I became something like a pharaoh. I had everything in my hands and I was getting power as I grew older. I took a pice of my 13th b-day, me and my mom with the cell phone. I thank her for giving me that present but it got me in trouble.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Why do you think your cell phone got you into trouble? Maybe for your next birthday you can ask your mom to start a savings account for you instead of spending money on a gift? That way you can save for college and not have these things that distract you so much.

I'm Not Feeling This Topic

The people on my mind are the only people I love, which are my brothers and my cousins and my lady. They're always on my mind, every day, and I think about them and sometimes dream about them. It's hard to sleep every day and it's still hard. I miss them all and hope they do good.

-Chinnez

From The Beat: They're undoubtedly thinking about you too. We know that you want the best for your family and you want them to do well, but what about you? Do you have these same wishes for yourself? Remember that these trips to the Hall work both ways - you're taken away from the people who care about you, and they have the same thoughts that you do.

I'll See You Again

The picture I will always remember is one with me and my homey, Archie Z. He passed away in early September 2008. I miss him and wish he could come back but I know I'll see him again one day.

So to Archie, rest in paradise. Gone but not forgotten. We love you and miss and you'll always be in our hearts and I'll see you again one day, much love.

-Speedy

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you friend is gone, Speedy...It's hard to deal with death and even harder when the person is so young. We think that we can only die when we're older but that's not the case, we can go at any moment. This is why we should appreciate our lives. Does your friends death make you want to live your life differently?

Impressions of Me

Now considering the fact that I'm incarcerated, people tend to look at me like I'm an animal.

I get the impression people feel that I'm not human. That I am not of this world.

Well I breathe. In fact, I do need oxygen and I do need food. My mind is learning, still.

Although I don't have emotions anymore, although my body is drained of tears, I still feel, I still need.

But maybe that's it. Yes. The cold blank stare, and the smile of evil.

Maybe that is what gives them that impression. Of the animal, of the non-human.

Or maybe it's the hair. The hair that tells the story. Or possibly the way I speak.

Maybe it's how I act and my reaction too. Everything. Maybe it's 'cause I'm Kraz-e.

-Kraz-e

From The Beat: Or maybe it's because people are quick to judge? We don't think you're crazy or emotionless, Kraz-e, how could and emotionless person write such a raw piece? What makes you feel this way?

Me And My Ex

A picture that I would always remember is one time when me and my ex sister and brother were in my room just kickin' back listening to oldies me and my ex were in the bed and we took a picture together.

-Crazy One

From The Beat: Do you ever find yourself wishing to go back to the old days? We bet it is good that you moved on...

Obama

Hey what's up? Today I'm going to talk about Obama.

Well, today is my first time writing to The Beat. Well, I'm going to talk about Obama. I wish him good luck because he is the first black president and I hope he'll do what he says he was going to do to change and make a better country and state.

-Guero

From The Beat: We hope so too!

Not There

If I could go back, I'd take a picture for the senior yearbook. I stopped going to a regular high school after my freshman year, I was never in a class picture so I have nothing to look back on.

-Missing High School

From The Beat: Try looking back on other things if you don't have a picture to connect you to those days - do you have anything from your class that would remind you of how things were? How about gifts from friends or something you wrote? You can use those as reminders even if you don't have a class picture.

Run

Well I'm just going to tell you bout this group home I'm going to, it's my third one. It's out in Turlock but I'm just going to run so I could get Hall time. But I hope you guys put me in The Beat. Probably not, but it's coo'. Late.

-Dave

From The Beat: That doesn't sound like a smart plan- and it wasn't, 'cause you are now locked up! Now that your back in the Hall, are you looking at more time? The group homes are there for a reason - they're trying to help you stop coming back to the Hall, why not give it a shot?

Just The Four Of Us

A picture that I will cherish forever would be one with me, my brother, my mom, and my dad. It was taken when I was about in 6th or 7th grade at a prison. It was at a prison 'cause I know that my family will never be the way it used to. And also 'cause I haven't seen my dad since then. He'll be out soon though. I can't wait... But it ain't gonna be the same.

-Done

From The Beat: We're glad that your family will be reunited again. Maybe you can take another picture with the four of you to remember happier times when you're all together. Though things may never be the way they used to, you can still build a future that is just as good as the past.

Last Words

Well I am leaving to live a better life and I'm planning on leaving everything behind - my lady my family everything. I'm gonna live a life and live it on my own, without saying nothing. I'm gonna leave with a plan to stay away, hopefully never come back. The reason I would keep it to myself is because they can't be with me in my bad times they don't deserve to see me on my good times so I wouldn't tell no one nothing, I don't even think they care so screw it.

-Saying A Lot

From The Beat: Are you leaving for your own good? Sometimes leaving your hood is a good way to break ties with gangs and other habits that keep landing you back in jail. We're sure that your family and lady love you enough to want to at least know where you are and what the plans are. They will worry about you if you simply disappear one day.

I Love You

The grass is greener on the other side,
she's the only one who sees mercy,
Warm her up and take me high
Mary Jane and I,
Take our mind to the sky,
She and I can fly,
Higher then high,
All I feel is a lie,
Before I was fried,
Before the love of my life,
I wanted to taste the pie,
All green in my eye.
She was always fine,
We were always high,
Mary Jane and I.

-Slow Poke

From The Beat: DO you think you'll still smoke once you're out? Instead of smoking why not write about it instead? Stay sober and your life will become a lot clearer/brighter. Swear!

I'm Not Feeling the Topics Tonight

G- onda Beat? Pues, this is Hersheys again. Well, today I'm not feeling the topics, I'm thinking about when I get out.

I'm trying to do good when I get out but I always end up doing wrong. Pues, I'm gonna try to get my high school diploma. I just need 60 credits and the English part of the exit exam.

Pues, that's it for today.

- Hersheys

From The Beat: Great job on the exit exam! You've already gotten one part down you just need the other half. What have you been doing to prepare for the English half of the exam? And we know that it's hard to do good on the outs when you see everyone else doing all the stuff you're used to but why be like everyone else? Your life is your life, why mess it up?

The Graduate

Today I'm gonna keep it simple. It's your boy Young L. Today I'm gonna write about how things are going for me. I just graduated in December of '01, and now I'm enrolled in a trade school.

I get out in two months with no probation. So basically in two months I'm out the system. So that's coo'. I can't wait to get out and start stacking and smacking every day.

-Young-L

From The Beat: You'll be out of the system and on your way to a solid job, keep that in mind. Starting a trade is a good step for your future. And getting out with no probation is not a common thing, so you should be thankful for that and try not to take it for granted. Forgetting the situation that you could be in is an easy way to get locked up again.

The Things I Regret

The things I regret is not being with my family. I write to them every day and they say it is not the same without me. They say it's not fun to see me locked up. I regret that I'm making my family worry and that I'm not able to see my grandma, I'm sorry that I made her cry. I regret not staying home I wouldn't be in this mess if only I had listened to my aunt.

The only reason why I'm here is because I was chillin with the wrong people. I need to change the way I look and choose the people I hang around with carefully. Like my dad said, "son, just be yourself you don't need to prove anything to anyone."

The things I regret are all the stupid things I've done in my past. I just wish I could turn back time and undo all the dumb mistakes I did.

-Manuel

From The Beat: You might not be able to turn back time, but you can decide your future. When you get out will you hang with the same crowd as usual or will you finally listen to the advice your family gave? We hope that this time is your last time in the hall. We wish you the best.

The Last Words To My Family

What's up Beat? This is Young Uso Kefi. Today I'm going to talk about my last words. My last words would be to my family. It won't be that hard to say goodbye but it would be hard for me to go somewhere and not know when I'm going to return, so I think that will be hard for me. Until next time.

-Yung Uso Kefi

From The Beat: You've already had to say goodbye to your family for a certain amount of time when you came to the Hall, is that the reason why it would be easy for you to say goodbye for another reason?

This Road

Hey Beat let me start this off by saying I do see a road that I have almost reached. It's some what good but I know that there are successful gangstas. I could be one too. I want to focus on school and graduate. I ain't going to ever get put to rest. I'm going to go out with a bang in life.

-Sneaks

From The Beat: By successful gangsta we hope you mean someone who has put the gang life behind them and has moved on to better things - things like school and a job. If you want to go out with a bang in life, why do you want to put the time and effort into school?

My Life

Everyday is a struggle in San Jose. People fighting war in Iraq and I am fighting my own war with my rivals. Everyday is a struggle to survive in these streets. I am on my grind trying to make a dime to get a crumb in my tummy 'cause it's ruthless in these streets. Gotta stay strap 'cause I ain't the one getting shot. They better shoot before I do. That's everyday life in my hood/shoes.

-Droop

From The Beat: This is the war you are developing and the way that will never end if you don't stop it. Whether you want to put an end to this war or not, the decision is yours. It doesn't need to get really far in order for you to stop the road you're walking through. It's your choice!

It's Gonna Get Better

A yo' Beat, this is Pedro, I hate cops that are racist. The one thing that pisses me off is they can lock you up and have a reason to lock you up but they lie about it pretty much and that's how I ended up in here in this lonely cell, but if you got locked up because a messed up cop, don't let that get you, keep your head up soon karma would get that cop and it will come hard.

-Pedro

From The Beat: It sucks that there are crooked cops out there keeping us down. What do you think we can do to change this? We hope you will make a change in your life so you have better odds in not meeting these crooked police officers.

Q-Vole Beat

What's up Beat! It's Mikeyo coming out of this unit. Well tonight's topic is going to be about my last words to my loved ones. My last words would be that I love them with all my heart and I'm always going to be thinking of them constantly.

I would also tell them to stay up and I will try to be home soon, and I will try to come home soon, I would give my little brothers and sisters hugs and tell them to be safe. Well that's it for tonight, until next week, gone.

-Mikeyo

From The Beat: Have you ever told them what you feel about them? You don't need to be against the last minute to express how you feel. You should try it. We're sure they would appreciate it so much to know this. Thanks for sharing.

Last Words

Once again salutations it's got to be Lil' G from San Jose. Well Beat and Beaters I'm going to write about my last words.

If I was to die in my death bed and all my loved ones were around, I would pour out my heart to them and tell them that I hope I will go to a better place and that I'm sorry for the way I was and that I wish I can go back into the hand's of time and change.

Well Beat that's about it until next time with my utmost love, respect, loyalty, and pridem alrato.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: Well, you got a life, you're still healthy and they are still around, so make that change for them. Open your heart, release what you feel, and make that change that can bring joy and happiness to your life.

Last Words

If I was to move, my last words would be to my dad and that will be that I'm moving away and if you need anything to call me because I'm still going to be there.

-Lil' Green Eyes

From The Beat: We're sure he'll appreciate your call. Beside that, what else would you tell him that you've never said to him?

Last Words

My cousin P is dumb, and my last words to him are "you're retarded and what were you thinking." Well brother do good and also "don't take that deal of two strikes and ten years 'cause your gonna get the third one when you hit the pen."

Well I wish you were out because I miss you bro' and we would have been blazing it up "stupid kid." Well that all I have to say so I'm out.

-Lil' Green Eyes

From The Beat: Why would you say that to him? What did he do? What would be the right thing to tell him to do to help him out of this ugly situation?

My Loses, Gains, and What I Still Have

You see. I've lost a lot. Mostly what I got. Got taken on the spot. For example "the top". I used to be a lot. But now I'm just a dot. Given a cell to rot. And tie a few knots. But it's all good to me. I still remain a G. I still am to Kraz-e. And have a lot to see. But what's to be a G And be to Kraz-e When you're on your way to see The penitentiary Yes. I lost my only daughter And she lost her father. Although I cry for that. I'm glad that mommy got her. My brothers have betrayed me. Except for Ray and Laz-e. When times got really crazy their feet. Never moved placing. Guns been at my head. Girls been in my bed. But just like reading a book. It's all done and said. But now I sit in a cell. Twenty-three hours a day. Three meals to eat. And a lot of time to think. So go ahead and blink. But leave your eyes closed. And pray for me. For my life, is cold.

-Kraz-e

From The Beat: Your pieces just keep getting better and better. Each one is raw and personal but so different form the last...we hope you won't stop writing, not only is it great to read but it's a great outlet to let loose the frustrations in our mind and life. What is your plan to bettering your life?

Empty

When my cell phone starts ringing homeboy say, "what's up? Let's chill." A few freaky girls want to meet you for real. Yup, so come on through. Cool that what I'm about to do. Hours later, I get to his pad looking dirty and feeling hella mad homeboy says "what's bad?" "Well, I was walking and I got stopped. I was off my toes and I got dropped." "Who was it? It was an enemy from the 'hood" "Well let's go"

So we get our toys and are ready to ride, changed our looks to unidentified. Now we're cruising down their street and homeboy driving me in the passenger seat. We plan alright, and this is how it's gonna go tell 'em your 'hood and telling your Niko. Hey homey look to your right, damn that fool is clean out of sight. Pull over homey. Alright go ahead and do what you got to do, be careful Niko with leaving any clues for who the white boys. Don't trip just be ready to dip now. I'm creeping tip-toeing. It's like I'm floating on thin air, it's like my weight is less than hair. I get close enough from behind fears, nerves, anxiety is running through my mind. I couldn't get my mind to reality guess it was mentality inside my body. I felt a snap. It was a damn enemy. My eyes and my mind couldn't take anymore. I took off wrong way running left, homeboy thinking I was coming, my ears are ringing, it's hard for me to hear, but cop sirens told me they were near, and my heart is pounding. It's like I'm drowning. I'm trying to hit fence after fence, but this gateway is too intense, too intense for my body so I stop, stop to catch my breath, my heart beat is faster than some fool on meth, catching my breath I look up what do I see? from a helicopter reading SJPD. "Drop your gun and put your hands in the air." Forget that I took off like I didn't care now I'm in a dead end and I stare straight at twenty pistols and I said, "shoot if you dare" a tear drops from my eye 'cause I knew I couldn't lie the DA will beat me at trial. The system won't hesitate to give me 25 with an L so should I just see the homeys in hell.

-Niko

From The Beat: This is a very creative piece, but a very disappointing choice to do. Can you see the situations you get yourself into? You were lucky things didn't get to the next level. If it had gotten to the next level, it would have been your homie who was driving to tell the story. You're risking your life at a very young age. It is not worth it! The lifestyle you are living is nothing but a dead-end, equaling a life of pain and sadness for you, your family and all those you effect by the poor choices.

I'm Out

Well what's good Beat? It's me again. Well this will be my last Beat so everybody that is doing hard time stay up 'cause this is my last Beat.

Well I'm out next week on Tuesday, and hopefully I do good. I don't want to come back and I'm not coming back I know that for a fact. I'm tired of being in here so I'm cool of this I have a baby it's a boy his name is Andrew.

Well I also have a baby sister and a mom that care about me, so I have to be there for them. Well that's it Beat stay up I'm out this hell.

-Armando
From The Beat: If you don't want to come back, forget about the word, "hopefully." Do it. You're not alone anymore. You have a child that needs a father like we all needed one. He's your blood and you have to step up like a man and face the responsibilities. Stay out and safe.

My Letter to Obama

Dear Obama,

You should keep checking the cops because there's a lot of racist cops out there picking on everybody and locking them up for no reason.

The cops are hurting and killing people in Oakland and the Bay Area and pretty much they're winning and we're losing so just help us out with the few racist cops out there, please. This racism that the cops is doing should end 'cause it ain't right.

Sincerely...

-Cj
From The Beat: Thank you so much, for writing this letter. We hope that President Obama does take a look into this problem because too many of us are affected by racial profiling from the cops in our areas.

No Point In Life

What's up, Beat? This is Jr. I just wanted to let you know I just like my tittle, there is "no point in life."

Some people spend their whole lives in school. But what's that going to do for you when you're dead? So you might as well live life however you please.

For instance, my choice of life that pleases me is getting involved with gangs and it won't really matter one bit to me if I die because of gangs because I'll die doing what I enjoyed.

Also, I know that I'd be going to heaven and be watching over my family. Eventually, we'd be united in heaven sooner or later.

Well, that's all that's on my mind for this week, so 'till next time I'm out.

-Jr.
From The Beat: Have you ever thought about the purpose of someone's life? Yours? Or what's after this life? Why do you think you enjoy being in a gang? What's the point of giving away the only life you got over something that isn't worth it? The way you think is wrong. And we hope you get the true meaning of life before it's taken away.

Those Pictures

Q-vo Beat? It's that homey Darky just telling you vatos about some flikas (pics). Pues flikas are firme (Flicks are sick) especially when it's with the homeys and the hynitas (girls) in kick backs. Just thinking about those firme (good) times that we have.

Also 'cause pics are memories that forever live. Pues that's it for now. To all, keep your head up.

-Darky
From The Beat: Do you have another picture with your family and you in it? Thanks for sharing!

Her Image

Well, what's really going on Beat? How are ya'll doing? Me, I'm cool. But I just want to pull the sheets off a topic that I'm feeling.

Well yes, I do got a picture that's more than likely my favorite one. Well it's ok me and my girl Rebecca. Well in the picture her and I are posted on my couch. It's me and my favorite one because we were so happy with no worries.

Now I'm in here hella sad without my gummy bear, and I know she's going through it too! But I'm getting out late June or early July.

So anyways, every time I look at that picture, it reminds me of the good days. I won't have another one of those 'till I touchdown, ya feel! But you all know my second anniversary is in the beginning of February. So it's the second year that I've dedicated my life to my baby.

Well I got to go. Keep your head because pain is only temporary. And remember, you can't keep a good man down. Yea-hooo!

-Johnny Blaze
From The Beat: It seems like you got a nice girl waiting for you. Don't keep her waiting. Remember how hard it is to find someone like her in these days. Keep that picture and try to keep the love you feel for her and her love towards you active. Thanks for sharing! We are sure that she feels the same way you feel when she looks at this picture.

The Picture Of My Niece

What up Beat? I am about to talk about a picture I would always have in my heart.

Well anyways I would have to talk about my little niece because she is hella cute. I love my little niece because she looks just like my mom and I ain't never gonna forget about her even though I haven't seen her for a long time. I wish I could hold her in my arms because I hella miss her because she is far away from me well that's it for now I'm out late!

-Cm
From The Beat: She might be missing her uncle as well. To experience the first days, months, and years of a child's life is the most beautiful thing anyone can experience. You're missing out a lot by being in here. The time is now to get your act together!

My Last Topic

This is your one and only Chino from Milpas. Today I'm a talk about my last words. For some case, I move out from California, I will tell all my homeys to take care and that I'll be back to do all the crazy things that we always do.

I am aguitado (sad) 'cause I'm getting out this Saturday and that's all I have to say.

-Chino
From The Beat: Why are you sad if you're getting out this Saturday? Well, back to the point of your piece, are you also going to say the same thing to jail? If you were to leave and come back to the same things, you might also end up in here. It would be a shame not to say good-bye to this place. Get it right!

The Picture Of Love

What's up Beat? Me, nothing, I'm just thinking about my girl and how we went to go take pics. She look so beautiful in the pics and pics say a thousand words. I got more than a thousand to say how much I love her. Pic' last forever just like any love, but yeah, all I got to say is I love you Bionca. Memo and Bionca.

-Memo
From The Beat: What are you waiting for? Go ahead and tell her how you feel about her.

Good Times

I miss waking up and annoying my boy.

I miss arguing with the homie, and proving him wrong.

I miss my other homie, always understood what I felt.

We've been able to help each other get through the days and months.

I miss you guys.

I realized that I got a chance to change,

I've realized that you guys really cared when I would fall.

You guys would help me up.

When I was stressing, you guys listened and help me cheer up.

I miss seeing you guys laugh when I would say dumb stuff.

I miss you guys all when you feel bad.

Help each other out.

Miss you guys.

Thanks for understanding me.

Remember you got a friend that cares.

-Flea
From The Beat: Maybe you can ask your friends to be your support system? For example, whenever you feel like doing something that you know could get you back in the halls, call one of your friends. If they're real friends then they'll put your mind back on track whenever you feel yourself slipping. Having friends that support you during all the good and bad times is something positive to look forward to when you get out.

Violence: Nature Or Nurture

Violence is here, violence is there, violence is basically everywhere!

Violence comes from me, violence comes from you, try and stop us and guess what we'll do!

Whether it's beating people up, or robbing someone's purse, this shhh here will just keep getting worse!

Out on the streets or in your own home, violence around here is surely known!

You can go to church, read the bible and pray, but violence will never stop, not even for one day!

You can cry, moan, even throw a fit, I'm just giving you the history of violence from where I sit!

-L
From The Beat: True violence is everywhere, but does that mean it can't be stopped? Why do you think so many people take such a negative view when it comes to stomping out violence? Instead of saying, "Oh, violence can't be stopped," why not say to yourself, "What can you do to try and stop the violence happening in your city?"

Setting Goals

Well Beat, it's Sneaks. Well, I want to talk about setting goals for ourselves.

I just found out that I passed my CAHSEE, I accomplished my goal. You know, I can never leave the gang life, but I want to be a better mentor for my people and set goals for myself. My next goal is to graduate then go to college.

To all, make a plan and stay out of institutions. Much love, I get out soon. I've been in here for seven-plus-months. I got a plan and hope to stay out and become somebody one day.

To all, maintain your composure and head high.

-Sneaks
From The Beat: Setting goals will take you farther in life. Gang life doesn't have to define who you are, thank you for proving this to all the skeptics. But why do you think you'd stay with the gang life if you know where it takes you? Congrats on passing the CAHSEE and it makes us happy to know that college is in your future.

I Love You

Baby, I love you for many reasons, so many that I can't even explain if words could explain how much I truly do. I would, would jump from wall to wall. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about you.

You are my world just as much as my son. I will stand by you forever as long as you stay by mine. I know that you will, no matter what 'cause you have been here for me when I needed you the most even through the good and bad you're the only one that calms me down when fools talk shhh. You know what I'm about and people will never know 'till they push that last button and feel a true hit.

People talk shhh, but it don't phase 'cause baby you're the only one I need. Babe you and the way you make me feel. I need you just as much as you need me.

As we stand strong, we'll see people around us fall nobody has what me and you have. I thank you for being by my side and always loving me, baby. I will always have you in my heart forever and always I love you beautiful.

-Drifter
From The Beat: This was touching but do you think you'll go back to doing the same things once you get out? From the way you describe your love for her, it seems like you got a good woman that is sticking by you even through this incarceration. You have your girl and baby boy waiting for you at home; they should be your motivation to do good and go back to them

Mama

Mama, I'm really sorry for the last few years.

Mama, I'm really sorry I made you shed those tears.

I can't say why I do the things I do

But I wish you really knew that I never meant to hurt you.

It eats me up inside every time I make you cry

So I try to live right and give you one peaceful night

But right there's a fight

Because the street life's got me crazy.

I know I chose to live this life

I know its not the way you raised me

Are you ashamed of me, mama, for all that I've done?

Don't give up on me mom, better days will be coming

And you got the best of me

Mama, don't think less of me

'Cause I know that's why you're stressing on me.

See, my destiny is six feet deep

The way I live it just might be

But until that day don't you cry for me.

-Flaco
From The Beat: You should send this to your mother! We know she'd loved this as much or even more than we did. But we were wondering, why tell your mother to wait until your dead to cry? You have to understand why your mother cries now. She wants something more for you than this juvenile lifestyle! We know you're worth more and so does your mother. We hope that you learn to appreciate your life before it's too late.

Obama

Well, I think it's cool that a black president is running for president. I think it's cool because probably the black president is gonna help the minorities to come up in the world.

I think the white president helps in the violence between gangs because probably Obama could make some laws up and help out the poor.

-Boo
From The Beat: There's only so much that the president can do without the people's help. What do you think you can do on your part to help Obama make the important changes that our hoods, our country, really needs?

Shabbs

Aye, it's Shabbs once again coming at you with all the love, loyalty, and respect I got to give you.
I feel hella heated today, with a little under a few months to go, and start looking for work. I hope I don't run. I think I won't. I just want to get out. It's good though. I'm planning on going back to Great America for a job. They hire anybody. Well, that's it today. Peace out.

-Shabbs
From The Beat: Keep your head up Shabbs things will get better, just stay focused and work hard on what you want in life. We all start out at small time jobs, they help build our characters (and resumes) and it makes us better people in our life.

La Foto (The Picture)

My baby's brothers first birthday is the picture I always remember. The reason why I would remember it is 'cause it's his first and well it was a cool day.
My mom made him a chocolate cake and it was delicious. He looked so cute that day.
Well I can't remember that much on that day, so pretty much this is where I stop. Late and to all, stay up.

-Sneaks
From The Beat: Thanks for sharing such as moment. We are also sure that your nephew might be missing Uncle Sneaks. Right?

Untitled

Well, I'm gonna write about something that happened to me when I was in here. The day I got arrested my mom told me that she got fired and she also had seven days to move out of our house. So then I was like, all right forget it.

Then my mom came to visit me a couple days later and said I have to tell you something and I was like aww crap this is gone be some bad shhh, and then I was like damn, just tell me and she was like, "we are moving to Sacramento."

I was like, "damn when are we going?"
She said, "we already started to pack."
I was like, "are you serious I want to say bye to the homies!"
She was like, "naw."
I was hella mad and I left the room and now that I am thinking about it, it's kind of good because I know some fine ass females and my homey from the set that's been there for me since I was in diapers, in Sacramento. I'll be kicking it with him at my pad and smoke some bud and drink some forties.

-Obama
From The Beat: That sucks about your house, and it must be rough on your mom to have to move all the way to Sacramento, especially with you still locked up down here. It's also not her fault that you have to leave so quickly and don't have a chance to say goodbye to your friends. As for kicking it drinking and smoking, well, you are only setting yourself up for another fall! With a name like Obama, you need to think big!!

Going To A Program

I'm going to get sent to a program called Advent and I'm going to be there for 9-12 months. They going to send me out of town to Morgan Hill or Gilroy and I don't know if I'm going to run or not. So yeah I'm out I just wanted to spit what's on my mind.

-Cp
From The Beat: We hope this gets to you in time. Don't run. You won't get very far, and you'll just be locked up again. Think before you act. Think about the ways you can improve your situation instead of actively trying to make your situation worse.

Keep Your Head Up, Brother

Sitting in the hall trapped in between these walls
Deprived of my freedoms,
Segregated and discriminated
Are the ways I feel
As people look down upon me
When they don't even know who I am,
All they know is that I'm just another Mexican incarcerated,
and again I'll say, segregated and discriminated
Are the ways I feel.
But I'm still chignon (the toughest) in my prime.
Living my early years so I can push myself
To strive through these struggles
With my head held high
So I never show pain sorrow
But for the third time I say it again,
Segregated and discriminated
The ways I feel.
So now the only thing to do is get educated and to help the young ones
In the future and tell them it's never too late
To want to succeed
But I'll tell you this,
Stay true to your heart,
be real to your soul Because I know I'll always be a mas chignon,
I just the tell eagle keep your head up brother.

-Mc Indio
From The Beat: What a truly wonderful piece, Mc Indio! We know that The Beat readers will find this piece inspiring and uplifting, as did we. What went through your head as you were writing this piece down? Do you think you'll really try and help the at risk youth? You never know, you might want to make a social worker your career choice?



The Generations Of My Life

The one picture I would want to keep with me would be the picture of my grandpa, brother, dad and I that we took six months ago. I would cherish this picture because some months ago my grandpa died and he was like my father ,because my real dad was always locked up. Two months ago my brother was sentenced to five years in prison next to Mexico. That's why I would cherish this picture.

-Lil' Clumsy
From The Beat: Having a record of several generations of family is touching, because you can see the progress of your family from person to person. If your grandpa was great, but your dad was always locked up, what are you going to try to be?

Violence: Nature Or Nurture

I do think non-violence is more effective. I think that because with violence, somebody always ends up getting hurt.
I don't think people are born violent. If you are a violent person, it's because you were influenced in bad ways by the people around you, at an early age.
I don't think I could list all the violent things I've done. But I could list a few. The first time I got locked up I was a young teen, but it was just over night. The cops pulled me over and I had a concealed weapon. Another time, I did something without thinking. I just snapped, and it happened so fast.

-M
From The Beat: Well written, M. So, how can you train yourself not to snap, but to think everything through, before you act? We suggest you pay attention to your body. Not every message comes to us in words. These tiny twinges or feelings can save us a great deal of trouble. When we feel them, it's time to stop acting and to start thinking. That's when the words kick in. That's when we can hear ourselves saying - slow down - you know where this could go if you don't slow down.

These Walls

These walls don't mean jack shhh. Through all these times there'll always be a brighter day. Does the machine stop working? Heck no. It fills up with physical strength and true knowledge. So educate yourselves.
Education is what separates the real from the fake.
That's real talk. So spread the word, my highly articulate birds.
Stay strong. Only the strong survive, and only if you're strong in the mind. Much love.

-Sinner
From The Beat: You stay strong. Read yourself silly. Become a walking book. Learn every word in the dictionary. And read very widely. Read history, politics, novels, poetry. Use your time wisely. And write. Write to us. We want to know how you're doing.

Violence

Violence is not something that people are born with.
Martin Luther King was the main one. He said to protest in the streets non-violently. Let them arrest you. Don't resist.
And violence comes from people living their life styles like cops, gangs, criminals. I was about to hit someone, but I didn't, because I knew that I would get a lot of consequences. I was very mad, but I stopped because I didn't want more problems. I just have to relax and let it go. I thought of something else - of my family, of my mom telling me I'd be OK.
My mom has the power to calm me down. The other day I was going to get into a fight. I was all pumped up, but she took me by the arm and said: don't do it. I just let it go.

-Gerardo
From The Beat: That's wise behavior Gerardo. That's using your head and your heart. We hope a lot of people read your piece.

Dear President Obama

Congratulations.
Here are three ideas.
1: Like when you go to college, you don't need to pay.
2: Congratulations on helping the poor people.
3: Give good houses and good jobs to everyone.
Sincerely,

-Eduardo
From The Beat: We will pass your letter on to President Obama.

Leader, Not A Follower

I'm a leader, not a follower.
I'm the omnipotent ruler of myself.
I continue to educate myself, daily,
to defend myself with a positive approach, and to avoid conflict.
I must incorporate professionalism in all aspects of my daily life and routine.
To eliminate strife with adversaries, I conduct myself in a civilized manner.
When I say I am an omnipotent ruler of myself, it means I can do what I want
with myself, that I have the control to do so.
I have great and absolute power to think freely, even though I am locked up.
No one can take the power of free-thinking from me, or my striving for education.
It never ends.

-Andres
From The Beat: Well said. You're on the way. We are keenly aware of your striving and your weekly progress. Your assiduousness impresses us. And here is a suggestion. We would like you to incorporate a consideration of kindness into your studies. Kindness - such a simple thing, yet in such short supply in our hectic, often mean-spirited, world. You could make a difference in this world just by studying kindness. There is a great and quiet power in kindness. Let it become a part of your education. Lead with kindness.

About My Family

Let me tell you about my family. All I want for them is not to worry about me being locked up. It's nothing bad. I just chill and eat and work out. My family thinks it's worse, but I ain't tripping. I'm getting out in a few months.
-Young Lock Up
From The Beat: Maybe it's you who should be a bit concerned. And maybe if your family thought you weren't concerned about being locked up, they'd be even more worried about you than they are now. Losing your freedom is no joke. Use these months to think about what you really want in life, and then think about how you can get what you want, legally and honestly.

Tunnel

What happens when you dig a tunnel and it goes too deep?
What happens if that tunnel is your life?
-Mil
From The Beat: Leave your shovel on the surface? We don't know. Tell us. What's the answer?

California Lifestyle

California is the land of tourists and surfers.
But mainly G's and young crazies run California.
Everyone has to enjoy the California sun, though
- whether you're working, surfing, or, drinking and smoking weed.
I know it's wrong, but that's the lifestyle you choose.
We all can agree that we love palm trees and the clear skies.
Whether you're a hiker, biker, or banger, we all love the beautiful beaches.
From the blocks, avenues, or parks, and ocean sites, California will always be beautiful.
I am California born and raised and will never leave.
-Paris
From The Beat: We can't recall a piece quite like this. You have an appreciation for natural beauty, and a generous way of looking at people. You're wrong, though, about who runs California. If you want some proof, just remember where you wrote this piece. We do like your writing style. We'd love to see more.

Free Obie

We live for better days... well, I know I do
Most of my boys is locked up, as I think of a few
Real boys that neva cowards
Real boys that get active, but believe, we ain't actors
All the struggles I been through
I look back, they laugh at them
Oh, my answer machine
I say to leave a message and God bless ya
But if it's safety, call 911,'cause I can't help ya
See, my name is Obie
People can cuss me out, but Ill walk past like fa' show
Free ya boy boy, 'cause I'm smarter than before
See, I'm dedicated to music, 'cause it motivation to stay out of trouble

-Obie
From The Beat: Sorry, Obie, but we had to cut the names and spots of your homies, and that kind of messes up your poem. We're very interested in you telling us what makes you "smarter than before" and how you plan to use that to your benefit. Maybe next week you can write about the music that inspires you to stay out of trouble.

I Didn't Do It

I don't think I should really even be in here this time. Actually, I do deserve to be serving time for a violation of probation, but I don't think people should get in trouble for just smoking weed. But I got arrested for something I didn't even do. Some sucka said I did something to him and the one who did it ain't even doing time. I ain't gonna cry about it, though. I had to do fifteen days and I'm out next week, hopefully.

-Lil' D
From The Beat: It must be hard to be locked up for something you didn't do. It just proves that the system makes mistakes, like all of us. Smoking weed at your age may get you in a different kind of trouble. They just published a study showing that if you smoke a lot, and especially if you start as a teenager when your body is still growing, you may have twice as much chance of developing cancer of the testicles as those who don't smoke. Is that worth it?

Last Words

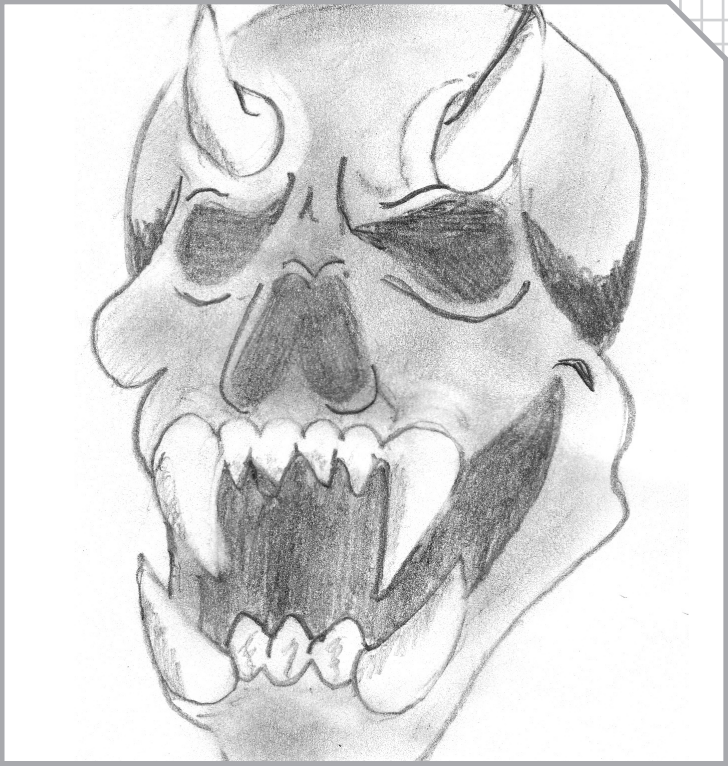
If for some reason I were to have to leave Marin, I would let it know that I'm happy to leave this dumb-ass place, and that people will do anything for attention down here, even if it means talking shhh about someone that used to be your friend. People are so dumb; they have no problem going up to you, talking hella shhh when they're with friends, but when they're alone, they just act like they don't know you. I swear, down here beezies are sooo dumb and do anything for attention.

-Marine
From The Beat: Well, this kind of thing goes on all over the place, not just in Marin and not just in the hall. It's just one of those things we have to live with, and try to ignore. As long as you are honest with your friends (and with yourself), you should attract other honest people who say one thing to you and the same thing about you to others.

Wakin' Wednesday

Fireworks flashed and rockets roared
The day that I met you
Nothing would ever be the same
Good or bad, but true
Picking out your seeds and stems
Thoroughly smelling sticky green
I rolled you up and smoked you
And I knew that I was free
Soon it all was over
And I knew something was wrong
And I packed a couple bowls
And took five hits on the bong

-Grand Master Flash
From The Beat: Your love song to Mary Jane is funny, but you may want to rethink your devotion to this fickle lover. A brand new medical study demonstrates a strong link between those who smoke a lot of mj — especially if they start as teens when their bodies are not yet developed — and cancer of the testicles, one of the most common cancers in young men. We don't know about you, but for us, between a bong and our gonads, we know what we'd rather hold on to...



Relieved

Wha's up? Me, kinda just relieved I don't have to go to placement. I was starting to think of all the good things about that place, but I don't even have to go. I just have to be extra good when I get out so I don't get sent out. Damn, well, now I'm just waiting to get outta here. I've already been here for a hot minute and I'm not sure when I get out. And, damn, I'm still once again the youngest one here and one of the only females.

This place isn't that bad. You get used to it after a while. The only bad thing about it is that you're bored most of the time... well, and the food, clothes and shampoo... ummm. Well, free the caged and let the people all the way out in placement just go home.

-Marine
From The Beat: It's good that you were trying to think positive about the placement, even though in the end you don't have to go. You can use that ability to be positive about any situation, and that can help you on the outs, too. We're glad you don't find this place too bad, but we sure hope you never really get used to it. You're made to live in freedom. Get used to that, and don't do anything to risk losing it when you're again breathing free air.

Moms, You Are My Heart

Madresita, tu eres mi corazon
Tu me ases completo
Moms, you make me complete. You are my heart.
Madresita, tu eres me sentimillentos.
Moms, you are my feelings. You are how I feel.
Madresita, si tus sentimillentos estan eridos, mi sentimillentos estan eridos.
Moms, if your feelings are hurt, my feelings are hurt.
Madresita, yo se que tu solo quieres lo major para me, y solo lo major.
Moms, I know you only want the best for me, and only the best.
Madresita, tu eres mi corazon. Tu me ases completo.
Moms, you make me complete. You are my heart.

-Alejandro
From The Beat: This is the most beautiful valentine you could ever write for and about your mother. We hope you send it to her for Valentine's Day, because we will bet it's nicest one she ever got.

God, what's life?

Roses are life and thorns are death
What's life without death?
What's a baby without a mother?
What's violence without crime?
What's sex without people?
What's the world without living things?
What's gangs without streets?
What's God without us?
What's drugs without drug dealers?
What's cops without thugs?
What's ho's without pimps?

-Bethany
From The Beat: It is a perfect balance. We appreciate life and love every minute because we know death is at the end. The bad balances with good but we must never forget it is the good that makes it all worthwhile. The good is what we live for. Make a gratitude list and decide to be happy and enjoy it now before it's too late because what's the good in giving up when you can keep walking? A baby without a mother is an opportunity for someone else to step up and love that baby and raise him or her up. Life is good and we have to fight for the goodness.

Valeria -Y- Jorge

For my man Jorge.
You are a part of me that I could never live without.
I love you for loving me just the way I dreamed it would be
time passes by and by and I fall more and more in love with you
You are far away but remaining near my heart
Too many haters out there trying to break us apart but no matter what
I'll be here for you. I got something to say so listen.
Other females filling your head with nothing but lies
So put those relationships aside and let me show you the true meaning of love. There's nothing I can say or do.
I'd rather spend my time with you
I'll tell you I love you and I truly mean it.
Distance is distance but time with you ain't nothing but a clock.

-Love Lady Brown
From The Beat: Well love is a mighty splendid thing. We were wondering if you love Jorge so much, why did you do something to take you away from him? If I loved someone so much, I would stay squeaky clean so there was no way I would ever be separated from him.

Make A New Change

I'm gonna choose a better life. Try to show my siblings the right path. Well I'm kinda glad that we have a black president. I thought this day would never come. I'm proud of Obama and I hope that Obama rides it out for us. I like that speech that he made. "Starting today we're gonna pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off and start a new life." That speech meant a lot to me and ever since Obama became President it feels like a new world cause he's trying his best to help the world since he's making a better change for us.

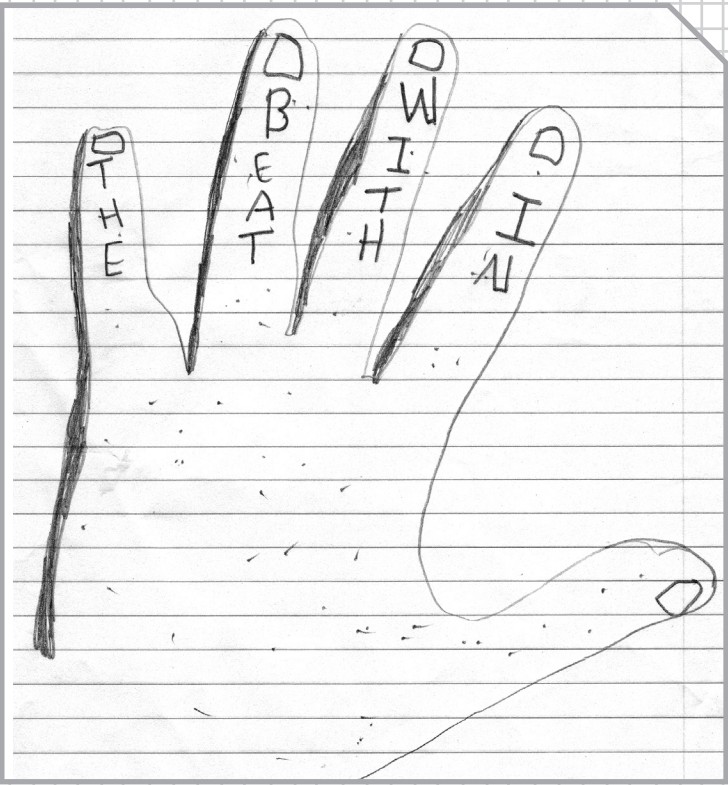
I'm making a better change for myself. I want a better lifestyle for me and my friends and family but I wish one day I can make it to be the first black lady president. Well, when I get out I'm just doing good. Not just Obama the president says so. I'm going to do good because I want to support the president.

-Carole
From The Beat: It is wonderful to be inspired by others, especially the president of the country. We admire your accepting responsibility to change your life and to improve yourself. If more people have your attitude we will turn things around and return our country to its success we are used to.

Whoever Reads This

I'm waiting to get sentenced to the camp, banging on these fools. I'm thinking about what's going on, on the outs. My baby mama's trying to keep my little daughter away from me. That's stressing me out, especially when I'm behind doors all day. My life's been rough for me ever since I can remember. Whoever reads this, you don't want to be in my shoes. I hope I can get this time over with cause my little girl needs me.

-Lil' C
From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your message! You're wearing some very difficult shoes right now, and it takes courage and strength to overcome those difficulties. Can you think of a way to make amends with your daughter's mother, so you can at least be part of your daughters life? Good luck, and keep us posted.



I Hate Violence

Violence is some thing that does not and should not be done. It is a waste of time and it has killed a lot of people and gotten many people hurt too. When people get violent, it's usually for stupid reasons life fighting because somebody looked at you weird.

When I went to Jr. High there were a lot of fights. I got in three fights while I was there just because some girls didn't like me. I didn't really want to fight but I had to defend myself when the girls jumped in. For some reason people like to fight and be violent.

Half the time people are only fighting just because it's fun and entertains the people around them. Many of my friends would get in fights and most of the time it was just for attention but some of the time it was because something stupid was said.

-Alexis
From The Beat: Yeah violence is stupid. People usually revert to this way of working out their problems because they do not understand how to work through their issues. The best thing to do is to stay away from these people. We realize this is hard when we are younger but we have to take the responsibility to not react if they say something. They are going down and they want to take us down too but we don't let them.

How It Is

So you have asked me what one thing I have always wanted to do in life is. Well, I have always wanted to get off of probation, and I have always wanted my life to be easier too. Well I guess you can't have everything that you want. I want to tell you people out there something. Being locked up messes up your head and your life. Why? Because when you hit the number 18 it's going to be hard to get a job, especially if you have a kid. Take it from a mom who knows.

-Pebbles

From The Beat: Most people wish for their lives to be easier, but a life worth living and growing in, is never one that comes easy. It is through hard work and faith that one's life becomes fulfilled and those of us out there that are chasing the easy life will probably never find it.

My Life

One thing that I have always wanted to do was to stay out of trouble, but it seems hard when you have negative people in and around you. But this time when I get out I have to do the best I can for myself and my unborn child.

I want to give my baby a better life then my mother gave me. This time around I am going to do my time and then surround myself with positive people on the outs. People that want to do something with their lives. I am getting too old to keep following the same cycle, and I am tired of it.

-Raemeshia

From The Beat: You have some hard decisions on your plate, and no one can tell you what is best for Raemeshia, only you can decide that. It sounds like you have a good plan to turn things around, what will you do first?

Memories

If I were to leave my hometown or move away for a long time, I would probably regret not telling my parents "thank you" for everything they have done for me. I would also regret not showing them in some way that I have changed and have become a better person.

I don't have a certain picture of myself that I cherish. I don't really like taking pictures. But my parents have a picture of all of us on vacation. It was of my mom, dad, brother and myself before my parents divorced. We were at Shaver Lake and we were standing on the dock and we all caught a fish and were holding it in the air. I don't know why my parents like that picture but they do.

-Steven

From The Beat: You remind us that if we appreciate someone, we should let that person know. Have you told your parents how much you appreciate them? If you haven't, maybe you should write them a letter. And what a memorable picture! Those kinds of memories will always stick with you.

Last Time Around

This is my fifth and last time in the JJC. I don't really have anything to talk about, so I'm going to talk about when I got jumped. My boyfriend and I were walking and five dudes came running out of some apartments. They were taggers and my boyfriend was a tagger too. They jumped me and my boyfriend pretty bad. My boyfriend was really high and drunk so it was all bad.

-Victoria

From The Beat: It seems ridiculous that people would jump someone over something as petty as tagging rights. People should encourage each other to share their art in less disrespectful ways, and quit worrying about what group they represent when they should be focusing on representing themselves.

Departing

If I were to leave and never come back I would go to Hawaii. There really isn't anyone that I would want to say something to before I left except for my baby girl, soon to be my baby mama. She's a pretty little lady, thicker than my skull. She is more beautiful than a butterfly, floating in the sky. I would tell her my feelings and show her my affections before I left.

-Cutthroat

From The Beat: If going to Hawaii is a dream of yours, what can you do to see that dream come true?

Last Words

My last words before I die: Tell my mama not to cry Tell her sorry for the way that I lived, at certain times Doing time for the way that I lived, committing crimes I don't apologize for things that I said, inside my rhymes I might apologize for things that I did I know was wrong To my homies out there, keep it strong To the homies that died I will see you there Don't be mad because of the way that I died We live unfair To my daddy who never raised me and made me a crazy baby I hope that you regret what you did You didn't faze me And last but never least to the God up above Send me down or send me up I will continue to thug.

-Lil' Whodini

From The Beat: That's the thing about being so young, you don't know everything, so how do you know if what you are doing is wrong? How will you know if you should have apologized for things that you did? How will you learn if you are dead?

My Family

My family is everything and I would not trade them for anything. They are more important than gold or silver. They are even more important than the streets. That's why I had to get out of there, before the worst could happen to e or my family.

I do have a few battle scars, from the outside to the in. You can't see them unless you get to know me. You would know that every trick I turned took a piece of me. It left me lonely and dirty, confused and sad. That's why I left the streets before the streets left me.

-Veronica

From The Beat: You have made a very hard and brave choice to leave the streets. There is nothing wrong with walking forward why you try to heal from the past, no one has to know where you have been if you focus on where you are going now.

Don't Get Mad

These staff people are making me mad. It's hard to control my anger and hate. But it's not that it gets me mad, it's how I react when they treat me wrong. It's hard on me. In court, it's going bad. In this facility, it's going bad. All I gotta do is my time and leave this place and not come back. So don't get mad because of what you did. Think through and stay up!

-Martin

From The Beat: It can be difficult to control your anger if you're stuck in a negative environment. Here's a suggestion, whenever you get mad, maybe you can think of something funny, like a cow and pig pinching each other's bottoms. It might help, and you might end up laughing instead of being angry. Changing you attitude not only keeps you out of trouble, but it helps you to feel less stressed out.

Last Words

If I were to leave and never come back home, I would regret saying good-bye to my mother, brother, and sister. If I could have told them something before leaving I would tell them that I had to go because I had something important to do. I would let my mom know that I loved her and to not be sad.

I would apologize for everything that I did that was wrong. I would tell my brother the same, including thanking him for everything that he had to go through to show us, me and my sister, better.

He, being the oldest and having to go through bad things, showed us what not to do and how to learn from our mistakes. As for my little sister, I would tell her not to do anything she knows is bad, and to second guess everything that her conscience over looks. I would tell them that I love them all, one last time and then dip. I wouldn't leave them though.

-Roberto

From The Beat: It sounds like you care about them very much. But we hope you see that you don't have to be leaving people to tell them how you feel about them. And you can do even better then telling them by showing them how much you care by being the best brother/son you can be.

Miss My Baby

My name is Mai and I have been in here three times now. It is really hard for me to stay away from here. I just keep coming back and forth. This time I am going to be real and not come back here. I do not want to go to a group home. I miss my baby so much; it has been four days since I have seen him. I am afraid that I might not get to see him if I go to a group home. On our second month together I was supposed to be out there with him but instead I was in here. I hope I get out soon so I can tell him how I feel.

-Mai

From The Beat: The one's we care about give us reasons to want to go home, but if you don't work on your other problems, the things that brought you here, not even a close relationship can keep you from coming back.

Losing A Friend

The other day, my mom came to visit me and she told me that my homie killed himself. She told me he was stressing out on life and he did some drugs, then he hung himself in the backyard. I was mad because I couldn't be out to help him with his problems. Sometimes I think if I were out I probably could have helped him. But I couldn't because I was locked up. I couldn't even go to his funeral. I hope it was the drugs that made him do it and not his problems.

-Carlos

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your loss. It's not easy to deal with a suicide, especially if that person was close to you. At least you can hope your friend is in a happier place. Keep the memory of him in your heart. Remember him as he was.

What Life Is About

Life is about getting money, a fast car, partying with a girl, and living like there is no tomorrow. So I am around town with my gun, not giving a frick, ready to buck at fools that don't like me. I love the way life is.

-Mango

From The Beat: Life is about so much more then living for today. Because when you are gone you cannot take your cars, and your money and your girls with you. You may not realize it now because you are young, that's why if you look out for yourself now, you can live to understand how wrong you are.

Dear Mom

I want to say that I miss you and that I love you with all of my heart. I want to change my life and to meet new friends. I want my grandma to know that I think about her every night. I know that one day I will change.

-Jatarica

From The Beat: Change is not something that happens one day. Change is something that takes many days, ones that can be taken one at a time. If you really want to be different when you get out, make a plan and tell those you love what they can do to help you.

Missing You

I miss you
I miss your smile
And yes I might shed a tear
Every once in a while
And it's because you
Are not here with me.

And if you were I wouldn't miss
You so much.

I miss you
I miss your smile
And yes I might shed a tear
Every once in a while
And even though it's different now
You're still here with me, somehow.

-Kathryn

From The Beat: So many people write about those that they miss, but we want to know when you make time to shed a tear for yourself? A tear for the situation that you have put yourself in, and the opportunities you rob yourself of by being locked up.

Planning

What's on my mind? I'm thinking about the positive things I want to do when I get out. The first thing I need to do is finish school. All I need are like 50 credits. Then from there I need to get a job so I can start making some money the right way. Then I am going to buy a car so I can be mobile. And during that time I am going to attend Fresno City College, but only a couple of classes because I am going to be a busy person and I don't want to stress myself out. Then after that time has passed, I could probably get my own pad and have a family. Then I am really going to be myself and won't hopefully have to live off my mom.

-Nino

From The Beat: What a great plan to get back on your feet! Stick with this plan, and in no time, you'll be independent and taking care of yourself. Good luck to you Nino, and thanks for always writing.

Split Feelings

Today I went to court and the judge told me that he was going to keep me detained until my next court date. I really wasn't trippin' because I saw it coming. Everyone always says to try to keep positive but it is hard because what happens if you do stay positive, and then you get sentenced to six months and all your positiveness gets crushed? That's why I say to hope for the best, but to also prepare for the worst.

-The One

From The Beat: Sometimes having a positive attitude, even at the worst of times helps you to realize that things could be worse. So if you get six months you could say at least it wasn't more. Planning for the worst is smart too though, because it helps you to realize what is at stake so you can remember that feeling when other hardships come up in life.

Who I Carry With Me

One picture that I carry with me is my boyfriend. I really cherish this picture because it means a lot to me. His smile makes my day and he has changed my world. Most people do not understand, but I don't care. I don't care what anyone else has to say because he makes me happy. He and his picture will always be in my heart.

-Jamikka
From The Beat: You are right, no one else can tell you how you should feel about other people. But that is spate from what is right for you and your life, so maybe you should listen to those others that care about you and might have a different opinion than yours.

My Last Words To You

I wish that I had gotten to say goodbye to you, but I didn't. When you left I cried and UI cried. I never thought that I would find a man that treated me with respect, but you did. I can't think right now that you are gone. I always wanted you to know about me but I was scared because I thought you would leave me if you knew who I really was. You made me feel so good inside but now I feel sad and hurt.

-Bethany
From The Beat: It is so hard to get over the loss of a loved one. But we think that the best way you can honor that person is to do right by the life that you have ahead of you. Good luck Bethany.

Wondering...

What's been going through my mind is that I don't know. I've been thinking if I am going to get out of here this month or if they are going to keep me here, or if my mom and family members are going to come visit me or not. How are things on the outside, at school, and what do the homies and family think about me since I've come here. I've been thinking about what people are going to say about me. I don't know if I'm going to be here next week or not.

-Jason
From The Beat: If you are wondering how others are doing, you should write to them and ask. We're sure everyone misses you too. Be strong no matter where life takes you.

City Of Angels

The city I come from was so cold. The game I tended to play was heartless. You had to be tough and rough, if not someone might have left you slumpt. When I was eight years old I was kicking it on the block.

By the time I was eleven I was carrying a glock. When I was twelve I got my first nickname. Later that year I left the hood. I would never forget that day because I cried a lot that day. Even now when I moved to Fresno, I went back to my old town every weekend and almost every break.

When I go there I get updated on the latest beat and try to make some money. I pray every time I go back that my homies ain't on crack. It seems like every time I go back I have to pour a forty to pay my respect to one of my dead peers, six feet deep of swimming with cement feet. It's gonna be a minute before I see the streets but I know my gangsta are gonna ride for me and my city is still going to love me.

-Roccet
From The Beat: Many of us have moved away from what we know and what we miss the most. But to truly be happy where you are now, it is necessary to let go of where you are from and to recognize the gift that you have been given to start over, and not live the same fate as the others that you mourn.

Pictures

Well, I have a picture that I used to carry all of the time and this picture means a lot to me because my baby is in it. I will carry this picture all of my life.

-Rodibow
From The Beat: Even if we don't have the physical picture, that picture carries with us in our hearts and we hope that it helps you to work through your time at the Hall.

Why I Am Here

I am in here because I got caught for something that I ain't supposed to do like robbing a house. This place is boring as heck and I would rather be in the hood getting high.

-Danny
From The Beat: The Hall is not a vacation spot, it is where people go when they disrespect others and their personal things. If you don't want to put up with the boring hall then learn to show some respect and quit being so selfish!

Not Feeling Good

What's up Beat! This is your boy, Peanut. Still in this cell. The only thing going through my mind right now is my court date. It has me tripping. My court date is later this month and I'm really stressed out. I don't know if I'm going to get out, plus my mom and dad haven't come to visit me in a while. I'm not feeling good because I heard my newborn nephew ended up in the hospital not that long ago.

When you're in this crappy place, all you think about is your family and it stresses you out. My daughter is also on my mind right now. I'm wondering how she is doing. I know I'm very young to be having kids, but crap happens. I just hope I get out because I really want to see my family.

The last time my dad came to visit me, he asked me if I wanted to go stay with him but I don't know yet. I know all he wants is to keep me out of trouble because he said he doesn't want me to end up like him, in and out of jail my whole life. It's very hard to change once you're in the system. It's hard to get out. Well, thanks Beat, for coming. I know you guys really want us to stay out of trouble. Alright then, Beat.

-Peanut
From The Beat: Thanks for writing Peanut. It's hard not being with your loved ones. But you have to stay strong and know that positive things will come your way. We know someone who was in a similar situation. He was locked up for one year for doing something dumb. When he was released, he told his family the only thing he did was pray to get out so he could see them again. He also had a daughter who was born when he got locked up. He missed her first birthday and first Christmas. You're a smart kid, and you'll get out soon. Think about what your dad said, and keep your head up!

What I Would Say

If I were leaving I would tell my family that I am sorry for what I have done, and apologize for springing the situation on you all at the wrong place and the wrong time. I love you so much and hope that that see you all again. The Lord and Savior knows how I regret what I have done.

I remember the picture of my mom, dad, sister and me that came out really pretty. I hope to see them really soon. When the lord sends me home I will go back and do right so I never have to come here again.

-Shyness Yancy
From The Beat: The good thing about not being gone forever is that you do have the opportunity to say what you haven't yet. We hope that you remember what regret feels like when you get home and harder decisions come your way.

Wanting To Go Home

My week was fun until I got locked up. I just want to go home for the fact that I miss my family and girlfriend. The thing that always goes through my mind is my family and girlfriend. They're always there for me and now that I'm locked up, I don't know who to talk to, who to depend on, and who to trust. To be real, I pray everyday to God to help me on my court date, which is coming up. And I hope they won't give me time at boot camp. That's what I think about. Everyday in JJC, just doing my time and waiting to go home.

-Billy
From The Beat: We feel ya! We hate being away from our own families too. Keep your head up, because looking down is the same as looking back—you can't see where you're going. But look straight ahead and keep on track so you can focus on the future and going home.

Me Right Now

I am going to go into a group home now. I am going to try my best to do my time there and then to get out quick. I also really want to join a gang. I want to be a part of something interesting and to get down with everyone that it respects. I would love to give my pride to the gang.

-Crazy Gurl
From The Beat: Let us tell you, there is nothing interesting about gang life. All that is in store for you there is pain, hurt, crime, and probably death. If you truly want to be a part of something that earns you respect and makes a name for you, there are many organizations in Fresno that you can get involved in. If you are interested write to us and we will share them with you.

Good Advice

I wish that I could relive this memory:

I was young and I didn't know much, but my dad used to tell me that whenever you feel mad, you should take a second and think about it before getting upset.

This memory helps to keep me calm now, and so I think about what he said and I take a second before getting mad.

-Frank
From The Beat: It sounds like you were lucky to have people around to give you good advice, the best way to keep that memory alive is to pass that advice along to others that you care about. Keep your head up.

Much Love

I want to thank the Beat for always allowing us to express our feelings and problems.

-Lady Brown
From The Beat: We want to thank you for sharing yourselves with us and teaching us how to listen and guide you all.

To The Staff

The staff doesn't know how it feels when a girl walks into the pod and we all haven't seen a girl in a long time. So if we whistle then we get in trouble and the staff acts like jerks by taking our points away of moving us down a stage. It is a normal reaction to act like that when a girl comes in and I hope that the staff learns about that.

-Jaime
From The Beat: Part of learning to be a man is to learn how to control yourself, no matter the situation. We at the Beat stand behind the staff and hope you learn how to treat other people appropriately. It is not the female's fault that you are in here, it is your own, and so you have no excuse for disrespecting women that way for your own selfish benefit. Also, try to putting yourself in another person's shoes. Have you ever walked down the street and been harassed by people you didn't care for? What you are doing is intruding upon other people's space. Please be respectful.

West 2 Tha East

I was raised on the west side. When I was growing up there, it was a good place, but now, drive-bys occur everyday.

When I was leaving the west side, I gave a little cry, not because I was leaving but because I didn't have any idea what the east side had in store for me.

When I arrived to the east side, it felt like I was home. I don't know where the feeling came from, but the east side did have something in store for me. The east side wasn't perfect, it had shootings too.

But the east side was where I could grow up and learn from my mistakes. A place where I could get my education. If I would have stayed I probably wouldn't be here today.

I admire the east side because it was home for me, my brothers, sisters and mom. I found out that my grandma lived on the east side so I had more heads looking over me. I really was home.

-Joshua
From The Beat: Great story Joshua! Home is where you make it, and it seems like you're starting to plant your roots somewhere. Family is a great thing to have to look after you and keep you on your feet. Good luck to you!

My Little Girl

Was up Beat! I'm going to write about this picture topic cause I got a picture of my little girl in my room, and that makes me feel hella good cause I get to see her every morning when I wake up and every night before I go to sleep. Man I miss her so damn much that I feel like crying right now. But I know she's gonna visit me today or tomorrow so I gotta stay strong for her and for myself. And this time when I get out I'm gonna stop all that gang banging stuff cause she's getting older.

I'm in here wasting my life in this crappy place and it hurts me knowing she is growing up with out me. That's why I need to change my life. No more playing around in the streets, I got a daughter to look after. That's about it for now. Thanks for listening. Stay up Beat!

-Bryan
From The Beat: We're so glad you shared the story of this inspiring picture. We also agree that it's important for you to stay out of trouble so you can stay in your daughter's life. She needs you. And we're always here to listen so write us anytime!

Leaving Behind

Having to move away from my hometown to a place where I am locked down is something I regret. Getting on the freeway, seeing my town left behind. No idea when I will be able to return and see the people I love.

And friends too, I miss chillin' with them. It was a hard sight to see. One thing I hope I never have to go through again in my life. The worse thing is to see my family come here and see me like this. This is not a good example for my nephews or future kids.

This place has had a great impact on me to get out and be able to do things I want to do knowing I am a changed man when I return. These are my thoughts of having to go through this and leave my loved ones behind. Giving thanks to people who have helped me through this time. Much love and respect to all those people out there who helped me in life.

-Lucky Charms
From The Beat: Leaving the people and places you love can hurt a lot. But just think, in time, you will be reunited. And when you are reunited, that will be your chance to show them how much you missed them.

Another Sunny Day

As time passes by I think in my cell about my court date
Whether I will end up on the outs or back in jail
Life in here is not heaven
It's hell
And if all goes well
I will be filled with joy and feel the rush through my afterlife
On the outs it's fun and outgoing
I live life to make serious money
As days pass, my stomach is filled with butterflies
Now I wait until my court date to see if I will see another sunny day.

-Kevin

From The Beat: It's not easy and fun being stuck in JJC. It sucks to be worried about your court date, but hopefully everything will work out. We wish you the best and hopefully you learn from your mistakes and make better choices in the future. Trust yourself and stay up!

Shhh

I hate that people are running game in the stories that they write for the Beat. That is how they figure us out and make the law enforcement harder for us. So keep it zipped and don't ruin it for the rest of us.

-Chucky

From The Beat: We have published this piece because The Beat Within has nothing to hide. We do not share the pieces that you all write with anyone but you. That is why we do not publish full names and encourage anonymity. We are here for you to share your feelings with each other in the hopes that your story will help another like you in the Hall.

The Day At The Lake

On my birthday I went to the lake and took pictures of the lake, and the fish that we caught, and of us swimming.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We are guessing that these are the pictures that you cherish the most, and we hope that you get to have more memories like this when you get out of the Hall.

My Little Sister

My life is stressed out right now. I am in here and waiting for court. Last Saturday, I heard my sister was in crutches at visiting. When I came back to the pod, I was crying and it was hard for me on that day. I wish I were at home right now instead of being locked up. That way, I can help my little sister. I care about my little sister a lot. I go to court next week. I hope I get out soon so I can help my little sister.

-Ricky

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your little sister. We hope she gets better soon. She's lucky to have a helpful big brother who looks after her. She probably looks up to you too. What can you do to be a positive role model for her?

A New Home

I recently found out that there is bed space available at a group home. I was happy about this. I should be going there in a few days. I look forward to leaving the hall. I am in here because my anger got the best of me. I plan to attend anger management classes when I get out.

-Valden

From The Beat: That's wonderful news! We share your excitement. It's always good to start afresh. Stay focused in school and keep on a positive path. Whenever you get angry, a good idea might be to write down your anger. Good luck to you!

Food Sucks

I'm telling you about the food in JJC. The food isn't always all the way cooked and then they give you a small portion and you're still hungry for about five hours. No meat. No seasoning. Old hard bread. Oatmeal with no sugar.

-Dominque

From The Beat: That's terrible, we're so sorry to hear the food isn't all that great. When you get out, what do you think will be the first thing you want to eat?

A Life You Don't Want Behind These Walls

Life behind these walls
In the Juvenile Hall
You don't wanna be in here
Cause you can't get a cell
You gotta be good
Can't be better than all
I took the wrong step
And I had a hard fall
But when I get out
I'm gonna be back on my feet
Eating hamburgers
Made out of real meat
Cause in here you don't eat
As well as on the outs
No more of me in the streets
And for that there's no doubt!

-Tork

From The Beat: We like this creative piece! It sounds like you've had enough of life in the system and you want a real home-cooked meal. Be sure to set goals and keep them, making sure you stay off the streets for good!

Believe

The rhythms that I sip
I spit them out loud
Loud and clear
So everyone can hear
I talk about life
Brag about money
Laugh at the unfortunate
Smile at the funny
Use metaphors when I
Rhyme and I rap
So I exaggerate every time
But I don't take it back
It's clear to me
That I won't be a G
But that don't mean
On me you can get it for free
I'm not hard
But I'm solid
Smart enough to maintain control
And launch off rockets
I'm gonna be somebody
Make something of myself
So all your thoughts
And your feelings
You can keep to yourself
Please believe
I got what it takes
What you need to succeed

-Devonte

From The Beat: Very cool rhymes! Your piece ends on a high note. Just reading this we can tell you are an intelligent young man who has a passion to improve his life for the better. Keep using your rhymes to inspire yourself and others to succeed.

Graduation Picture

One day, my brothers, sisters, mom and I took a picture on my graduation day and it was a very happy moment. I will keep that picture in my heart forever. It was a loving moment. I love them all. That picture will forever be in my heart.

-Roman

From The Beat: What a beautiful picture to represent a proud moment in your life with the ones you love! Let that picture inspire and uplift you in your sad times.

I Shouldn't Be Here

I just want to get out of here so that I can start my life again. I am so depressed that I cannot see my family and my friends. I hope to get out because I am not supposed to be here, this ain't the life for me. When I get out I swear I ain't coming back. I just want to be there for my son and to play football. I hope that I get the chance to tell my mom and the judge.

-Michael

From The Beat: People come in and out of the hall for many reasons. For some it just takes one stay here to change their attitude. We hope that is true for you too. Good luck out there.

My Main Man

I would do anything for my man; he is my ride or die. I am missing him like crazy. I miss his gangsta ways and how he carries himself. He is my other half and I feel that I am not whole now that I am locked up. I just can't wait till I see him and we can be like Bonnie and Clyde.

-Athena

From The Beat: Wow this sounds like a very dangerous situation, and we are surprised that you actually want it. If you truly loved this person you would be trying to get them out of this lifestyle instead of cheering it on. We hope you wake up before it is too late for you both.

I Hate The System

I'm going to write about my last court date. It was a bunch of BS. I hate my attorney. He's a jerk. Like they say, an attorney only gets you a ticket, locked up. I went to court recently and they just kept rescheduling my court days. I go back later this month because they set me up for trial because I didn't plead guilty to something I didn't do. If I lose, it's mando—I got more than a year, but if I win, I might get a chance at 365 in the camp. Most likely I'm going to lose. They're trying to prove me guilty and say I was going to shoot someone. There's not much I can do. I mean, I got caught with a gun so they think I was probably going to use it. I'm gonna stop getting my hopes up because I know I'm gonna lose this case. Every time I go to court, my stomach gets to hurtin, wondering what's going to happen next.

-White

From The Beat: You're in a difficult situation and we hope things work out in your favor. It's challenging to pull through these moments, especially when you don't know how things will turn out. It can feel like the people who are supposed to be your allies are in fact not trying to help you at all. Keep your head up, and stay focused. We wish you the best.

That Picture

I have a picture in my house of my uncle and to me it is special because he taught me how to drive a car.

-Ulises

From The Beat: We hope that someday you can do something for someone else and pass that life experience on.

Pictures

I always carry around a little picture of all of my family because I miss them, and carrying it around with me brings much love.

-Salvador

From The Beat: We hope that you get to see them again and tell them how you feel in person. Good luck.

Much Love

To the Fresno people, just letting you know that this juvie life ain't for all the people doing time. All I got to say is stay up and do your time. Don't let the time do you. If you come up in here, don't snitch cause then you will end up with more enemies or even get killed. If you don't want crap to happen to you, then don't snitch and if you do a crime, then be prepared to do the time. Until pencil meets paper, much love.

-Pepe

From The Beat: We enjoyed your piece, you're a cool writer. You seem to have a positive personality even though JJC isn't the most positive place to be. Keep it up!

Gone For So Long

I really don't write but I got something on my mind, like when I go back to court and what they are going to give me and how I hope to see my the family soon when my mom comes to visit me, and tell me about the outs, or tell me that one of my homies is locked up. It makes me feel like I've been gone for some years but hopefully when I get in front of this judge, he won't give me some years.

-Tha Boi Boi

From The Beat: We have to continue to be hopeful and pray for the best. All things work out for our own good. Just keep on writing and thinking positive thoughts. Even when you don't feel like writing, scribble down how you feel and watch the words begin to flow.

Last Time

I sit here wondering what to do. I have court soon so I think about what to change for my mom or should I stay true to my homies? I know what I'm going to change because I love my mom and she stuck around even when time's got bad. I never felt down because I always had my mom by my side.

It hurts to know she has to worry or has to come to each court date wondering what's going to happen to me. To tell you the truth she doesn't need that and I don't need this either. So, all my mom needs to know is that there's going be changes when I get out and that's the truth. It feels good knowing that I'm going to change and can't wait to make my mom proud. So far this is the last time in here. Time is going fast.

-Mom's Son

From The Beat: For us to change we have to do more than just say we're going to change. We have to have a plan. We have to have steps we are going to take. What will you do the first day you get out? What will you do the first week you get out?

The Best Picture

Once upon a time, I was swimming with my mom and my dad took a picture of us, swimming together. And we were looking cool together. I always have that picture. We've taken other pictures but that's the best one.

-Daniel

From The Beat: It's great to have this cool picture to treasure. We hope whenever you look at this picture, it leaves a smile on your face.

Words

Words could be violent even when they're silent
Sometimes they leave us broken
Sometimes they leave us smiling
Stronger than our thoughts
But weaker than our actions
Causing us to think in deep reactions
Take away what I hold deep inside my mind
Let loose what I hold to be within time
Give me rhythm
Give me rhyme
My words, they give me art
The ability to rap and what I'm rapping's from the heart
When my words and me part, I expect to be heard
To the very voice speaking to the meaning of the word
So say what you feel with no regrets
Your speech is promised freedom man
Don't you forget.

-Lil' Whodini
From The Beat: Thank you for your reminiscences about words.

Dear President Obama

Congrats on the victory. I watched you in D.C. I support you on most of what you said you're going to do.
You also said some things that rubbed me the wrong way because it would affect me big time. I like how you said you're going to reform. I think that's a good idea. I think you should change it up for people who need it instead of for people that abuse it. Like we should go back to depression days and make them show proof that they are trying to help themselves.

I'm so happy that you're trying to get us out of this war with no end. I have no clue why Bush went into Iraq to fight a religious war. Please tell me you're going to help this money issue we got going on. Just keep in mind that we are a capitalist economy and please don't do anything socialist.

This is the land of opportunity and you can do whatever you want job-wise. You can make whatever you like if you work hard enough. I don't think it's right to share wealth with someone that's not really helping themselves. To conclude this letter I wish you luck and your going to do great things.

-Roccet
From The Beat: We appreciate your courage to step up and speak your heart and mind. We appreciate your spirit and hope. We wish you and President Obama well and we believe in both you and President Obama and we need your and President Obama's contribution in order to be successful in this country.

Life As A Struggle

The life that I live
It's not simple or easy
The ideas and choices you make
Can be quick or simple to take
I can take lines, from friends I've lost
Like, "Life is like a gamble,
You either win or you lose"
Living life as a struggle
We all die soon
Rest in peace "Bad Ass"
One Love

-Lil' Lophy
From The Beat: Great poem! Sometimes we think death is the only way our struggles will end, but does it really? Will our struggles continue on to those we love? That's just something your poem made us think about.

Just Another You

Well to start with, being locked up is more whack then the dang food that we eat... I am doing a year for some bull shhh. But I will be out around next thanksgiving, kicking it with my squad, unable to stop, mackin' at girls in California.

-Free Maroe
From The Beat: You don't have to be just another boy in the Hall, you can face life like a man and quit with all the kid stuff, if you choose to. Now is the time to plan for the future, what do you think?

Making A Difference

What I will do to help remake America is to change the way I make decisions. I'm going to start with me before anything else. I have a lot to live for especially for my daughter. It will not take long. I made a mistake and I have learned from that so that's what I'll start doing to help make a change and to change America. We when make mistakes today, what are we doing?

Violence on TV and in our sight. Change! That's what needs to happen. We don't want the next generation to copy the bad habits.

I think that society is what influences people to do what they do. There's always going to be prejudice, poverty and violence but it does not hurt to try to change it and make things better.

-Vanessa
From The Beat: We admire your spirit and we will work to follow your lead. We know there are small things we can do in our lives to make our lives better and by doing that we will make the lives of those around us better. We are going to start by sweeping the sidewalk in front of our house and making it look good so when people walk by they feel better from looking at it.

Someone Care?

It seems as if everything is going wrong, day in, day out
I am steady feeling alone
Don't know what to do or which way to go
They say it's healthy for your self-esteem to be high but what happens when it's low? Some people say just go with the flow
Everybody plays as if they understand but they really don't know

They just pretend and put on a show.
All I asked was to be with my family but the answer was no

Or that it's in the process, but it seems to go slow
It seems like no one cares
Sometimes I look at my life as being screwed up but no one said life was going to be fair. I try my best but where I'm trying to go I'm just not getting there
So what do I do? Where do I go now?
My son is the only person that makes me proud
My dream has nothing to do with hanging out or being with a crowd
So please hear my cry, or spare a handkerchief to wipe my eye
I promise this from my heart
No lie
But until then
I'm burning and sizzling like chicken when it fries.

-Orlando
From The Beat: Life can put us in some difficult situations, balancing our emotions, our actions, our loved ones, and our future. So much seems at stake. You strike us as an intelligent young man with a positive future and a genuine desire to be the best dad you can be. Don't give up in this difficult moment, Orlando, keep moving forward, and in time, positive things will come your way.

It's uncomfortable here

I've been locked up for about 2 weeks now. It is hell. I can't see my girl. The food is always bad. It's always cold and I don't know how long I have to stay here but when I get out I'm going to IHOP and McD's.

-Justin
From The Beat: There is a reason life is not enjoyable when we are incarcerated. Our prisoners want us to take this time to reflect and look at life.

Hard To Leave

If I were to leave my town for a long time and not know when I would return, I think it would be hard for me. I would regret it so bad. I'm not the type of person to be like that. I'd make sure to spend one last time or night with that person or people, you dig? And that person is no one. I'll make sure I bounce out of here with my baby momma, my kid's and my family.

-Jesus
From The Beat: Leaving our hometown or people we love behind is never an easy thing to do. But new journeys can be paved when we seek out a new course. We're glad you've decided to take your loved ones along. Keep them with you in your life's journey.

Going to Y.A.

As you see, I'm going to Y.A. I'm just waiting to get picked up. The truth is that I'm tired with JJC but I don't want to leave this place. I prefer to do my time here because the girls here tell me YA is bad.

They say they pick on you and you could get stabbed but you know what if I got to go then I got to go. I don't have nay other option, do I? Well, when I get there I'm gonna just do my time and get out because prison is no place for me.

So, I tell you youngsters stay out of trouble or else you'll end up in prison. This is just advice from me to you.

-Rodibow
From The Beat: We appreciate you examining your experience and offering advice for others. That's all there is to do once we wind up in here; is to do our time and get out. But what did we do to get in here in the first place? How do we know we are not going to go out and do something that sends us right back in?

It's Crazy How Things Happen.

I just found out my ex-boyfriend got almost four years in county and my homeboy overdosed on Ecstasy. I'm in here again for running away from group home and for what? It seems just like yesterday that I was out doing my thang and not caring what was happening. We do things without thinking and then we pay the consequences and think that things are not fair. I'm about 18 years old soon and still they're trying to keep me in the system.

I know I did it to myself but on the outside I'm laughing and I think it's funny but on the inside I just wish I could be the little girl I used to be innocent, pure and full of joy. I was a girl who loved to be home and now I'm the total opposite and sometimes I wonder how I became who I am today and I think about what it would be like if I didn't do all the bad things I've done. But I am who I am and I'm not ashamed.

-Tice
From The Beat:We agree. Don't be ashamed but take responsibility. Take a good look at what was done and ask yourself why you did what you did. Maybe you weren't thinking? Take this time to think and contemplate. We all know if we keep going the way we've been going then we're just going to wind back up in JJC or county when we get older so why not change what we're doing and change how we think.

Violence in My Hood

I think my violence comes from my hood and it showed me how to fight and I think that people that grow up in the hood are exposed to drugs and violence. They see more than kids should see. People get stabbed or shot; that is what happens in the hood. I have gotten jumped and I started jumping people too. That is why I love my part of Fresno.

-Jaime
From The Beat: Did it feel good being jumped? We presume it didn't. But you turned around and did to others what you didn't like having done to you. When will the cycle stop? You control it? You can choose to stop it. We hope you do choose to stop. Be a leader. Remake your community.

Letting You Cops Know

This is your girl, Pebbles. Well these probation officers or parole officers, well they lie to your girl again. I mean, they judge us by our past. All a gangster wants to is just be free. It ain't our fault that we had a bad influence to the community but we ain't going to let nobody put us down. Plus when we try to do what we have to do we always get messed over, right? Yeah, so keep the game in your head.

We struggle in the outs and try to make life better but pigs make it worse cause we have gangbangng background. Plus cause we in Fresno, well then we just gonna make your job worse. We're dogs off the leashes. All we want is some respect and we'll give respect back.

-Pebbles
From The Beat: Until we check ourselves and change our lives it is useless to blame the police or our parents or our community and we'll keep coming back to JJC. It is not until we take responsibility and see the things we did that we can then decide not to do those things again. Peace.

One Day At A Time

I try to take things one day at a time here in JJC. I've been in here going on four months. I miss my kids so much. I feel like I am going crazy. I do this BS program and I get nowhere. You got so many personalities in here, so you watch what you say, but if you're like me, you want to tell them all to get the hell away. When I get out, I can't wait until that day and when trouble comes around me, I will tell it to stay away so I can straighten up my life. Or else it's CYA.

-Samuel
From The Beat: Be strong Samuel. We're sure your kids miss you too. It's great to hear you want to straighten up your life. What do you think you can do to make your life better? Sorry the program is not working for you, but thanks for writing. We hope you get to see your kids soon.

Good Times With My Boy

I want to write about all the good peeps that the prison system has taken from me, like one of my boys. He and I were like fire! Every time I got locked up he was there and we both put it down. I remember when he took the wrap for me cause I had bullets and he took them. We both got booked but all I got was a violation of probation. He ended up maxing out at Juvl and I got thirty days. I was released but came back to the Hall within five days. Man was my boy heated! Those were good times.

-Puppet
From The Beat: You're lucky to have a friend who's got your back. What are some ways you can both support each other in life so you don't end up back in JJC?

My Life is Hell

My life is hell because I have been in trouble with the law for a while now. I have been thinking of how I constantly live a life full of fear. As I grow up, I finally realize that I need to put the past behind me and move on. I have just been thinking about other things that I need to be a part of. The stuff I need to do is to be part of my family's life because they are depending on me but most of all, I need to be there in my baby's life.

The reason why I need to be a part of my family's life is because they are depending on me to change my life around and help my brother to do right. Some other stuff is life I been thinking I need to change my life around. I think I can help other people not to do what I did or to go through the stuff I went through. Now I leave you with this think about; how would you feel if some one in your family did something in their life to be taken away by the cops?

-Cherry
From The Beat: We would feel sad for our family member if they got taken away. We would be worried about how they would be looked after. We would want to get them out immediately and it would kill us when we thought of them because they are someone we love deeply. We encourage you to change your ways for yourself and for those you love.

Back

I'm back in this place and I am so stressed out and people are getting on my nerves already. I have only been here since last week! I feel so confused cause I'm back in here once again because of a warrant and I might be getting sometime for what I did. I feel bad for what I did. This is not cool.

-Ashley
From The Beat: Yeah, JJC does suck. They make it that way. We ain't suppose to like coming back although some people do. Hopefully Ashley, you will take this time to reflect and identify a more positive path to walk go by once you get out.

Feelin' The Beat

I feel the beat to basketball. Why? Because I love scoring a basket. I also love running cause it keeps my adrenaline pumping. Basketball makes my life famous. I'm really good at basketball. I even play people for their shoes. Also, I feel the beat for rapping cause rapping shows my expression and shows how I am toward people. I love girls. Girls keep me out of trouble and make me stay in school. I love being close to a girl, that's the best thing. But yeah, I feel the beat to everything.

-Adam
From The Beat: Adam, it sounds like you've identified some of the things that can help you express yourself and release your energy. Keep at those things because they'll help you relieve stress.

Bad Woman Gone Good

Everyday I think about all the things I've been through. The bad things and the good things. All the bad things I did, I regret it cause look at me now, I'm locked up and away from my loved ones. In here there's nothing to do but think about someone you miss so much. But at the same time it's payback for what I did. I will get out soon and be a better woman and just worry and out myself from now on. Life is hard when your alone. Love always.

-Baby
From The Beat: Life is hard when we are alone but we always have friends and we can always reach out to others to help them and as we are helping them, we realize we are not alone.

I Can Play Ball But Not School

My name is Sidni, I don' care about using my real name because everyone will know it one day. The reason why I say that is because I'm one of the best high school foot-ball players. I feel if I got an opportunity to play pro ball, I would. I'm not noticed too much because I didn't play the whole season. I had dislocated my arm and didn't get a scholarship.

Ius the school I went to nobody wants to go and see anyway. But I am hooked and may not be able to graduate from high school on time.

I try to stay away from drugs and gangs as much as I can but I live in the neighborhood and plus, a lot of them are my friends. As far as drugs I only smoke weed and I'm still trying to stop. It didn't really affect my game on the field so I kept doing it.

But it got worst after I started to steal and say things that I know were not me. Drugs really take you out of your character. I get out of here in 22 days and this maybe, is my last Beat writing.

I will have a lot of problems when I get out of here. I'm not excited to get out of here. I'm just looking forward to it. I don't want to go back to school. I was going to because I haven't been there in a couple of months. Plus, I don't think I will graduate on time.

I want to drop out and get a job and walk-on for football at Fresno State. If I don't make the team then I'm going to go to Reedley college and play. Where ever I go I will try to do my best to go to the NFL because I believe I have the skill to get there. But look out for my name and face on your TV screen one day. Either bad or good, I'll be there.

-Sidni
From The Beat: The best player we ever saw play in high school, never played on the college level because he didn't have the grades. You have to stay in school to be successful in football. Don't drop out and stop making excuses. Instead, work at it and make it happen. We wish you the best.

2 Young Minded Females

To the Beat. Hey this is your girl Pebbles. Yeah, What it is? I'm a dog without a leash. Well, I'm 17 years old and I started banging when I was 10 years old and I had a baby at 15. It was hard, not even close to easy, always worried and busy.

To you like-minded females, I say, ain't no baby gonna make you famous. So you better think you young minded females cause I'm a mother but I'm locked up. How about that one? I'm telling you to think.

-Daisy
From The Beat: "Think before you leap," that's what old folks used to say to us when we were kids. One kids jump off a bridge into walk and broke his back. Think before you leap, my little ones. God gave us a brain. It ain't no use unless we use it.

Life Is No game

Either you are living it as a game in the game or doing good. Well, I'm in the game so I have to play it well and fast or it will play me. I have been in the game for two years now, since I was 13. I'm 15 and in here for the 3rd time. I got locked up. It's no fun. Stuff happens so fast in the blink of an eye. I've never thought I would get caught up for what I did but I did.

-Amber
From The Beat: Nobody thinks they'll get caught but everybody gets caught. That's the way the game goes. Now, you can make some decisions. You do not have to go back into the game. You can make decisions and take actions like going back to school and being legit. Peace.



63 Days

This is my 7th time being locked up and the most time I've ever done was a week. Court is soon and I'm probably going to do 63 days...thinking about that gives me an ugly feeling in my stomach for a lot of reasons.

I've never been this close to my mom and not they're basically taking her away from me. I've ran away at least 30 times but this last time I was gone for five and a half months. I wish I would've stayed home with my family.

Now my cousin, my tia, and my grandpa are gone. I'm very disappointed in myself and the decisions I've made. I wouldn't be in here now if I would've just talked about what was in my head at the time and asked for help. I'm grateful to have the people by my side. I've done a lot of wrong things to them and hurt them. I'm not gonna make the same mistakes I did anymore. I just want to go home.

-Breanna
From The Beat: We are sorry you are realizing you missed out on some important relationships but remember many people go through this and many people get out of this. There is a lot more life left to live and there are many relationships that we will have an opportunity to be with. The more we return to Juvie the more time we'll get and the more unforgiving the authorities will be. It is easier to stay out of the system.

Young People Learn Violence Different Ways

I think young people learn to be violent in different ways, like my cousin for example. She used violence against her dad who used to beat her. That is all she knows. Also I learned how to be violent toward another person who is not part of my barrio.

I learned it from my homies that if that person ain't from my barrio then that person ain't worth anything. I became part of a violent gang and I learned somewhat of it from them. They are all I have at this time and I devoted my life to them.

I also got some of my violence from my home. Just like a lot of other young people did. A home can take a lot of effect on how violent a young person is. It ain't just from the streets. It's what you go through as a child. But I believe my violence came from both my home and my barrio. Either way it keeps going, and I do wish to get better.

-Athena
From The Beat: Yeah, violence is pervasive and it grows in our life like weeds if we don't stop it but how do we stop it? How do we stop the violence? First what we have to do is think about it. No matter if we win a fight, if we throw a punch that punch hangs out there waiting to come back to us. First, we have to think before we get violent. Sometimes we get violent because we are stressed out. In those cases, it is better to relieve our stress in a way that doesn't piss people off or get the police called.

Dear Mom

Sorry for all those nights I kept you up until dawn wondering where I was. Sorry for making you go through all this drama with me and then for keeping to mess it up. Sorry for manipulating you so I can have so much freedom and a twenty year old. Sorry for sneaking in people when I rarely was home.

Sorry for smoking in the house after you constantly told me not to. Sorry for gaining back your trust and then losing it just as fast. Sorry for all the times I scared you by telling you I was going to hurt myself. Sorry for smoking weed and cigarettes in front of my little brother.

Sorry for drinking and doing drugs in your home and lying to your face about whether I was on them at the time or not. Sorry for lying to you repeatedly and when you found out, lying some more about my lying. Sorry for all the times you trusted me when I said I hadn't been smoking and when I went to court and got dirties. And I am sorry you are not going to see this cause I doubt I'll be able to show you.

-Devon
From The Beat: We admire the courage and honesty you display. Of course, by apologizing for bad behavior means that we will not continue with that behavior. A true apology is admitting we did something wrong and then changing our ways. Easier said then done. The truth is in the actions. Talk and words are cheap. We wish you the best of luck and blessing.



Lock Up Is Hard

I would like to take this opportunity to tell everyone that being locked up is hard. But it is not the staff who are making it difficult. We are the one who are putting ourselves in here so we have no right to get mad at the staff here. They are just doing their job. I know most of the girls in here have been here a couple of times and they should know their rights. I have been here three times.

I know what I have done and I can't blame others for this. I'm glad to be here because if I were out there right now I know I would be struggling out there right now. Also who knows I could have been dead or hurt. I want to thank the beat within for letting us prisoners express ourselves. Also for visiting us in here and also the supportive from other writers. Love.

-Mlps
From The Beat: This is a great beginning...taking ownership of your problems. It seems that you are also appreciating the positive things and people around you. By changing the way you think and look at things positively, you are on a better path in life. Peace, luck and Love.



My Thoughts

What's up Beat the things going through my mind this afternoon is kinda unbalanced. I'm getting out real soon or I might be doin' more time before I get out. I've been feeling better though, I've come to accept any out come that I'm going to face. But peep this you're in a program and your runnin a cool program, everyone's all good with you. You mess up one time and they treat you like shh. I don't know Beat I guess that's my thoughts for the day.

-Ali

From The Beat: It's hard to be out of control of your own life. When you enter the system you let go of that control. We guess they want to make the point clear that it's important not to "mess up." What's most important is to get it together to live your life well, where you're good with everyone, and everyone is good with you—and you treat each other well; loved and free.

Streets Of Vallejo

What's up beat? This Mille, I'm tryna get up out of here.I aint thinking bout changing you feel, I'm finna be on, ya dig. I'm finna go right back to my city of Vallejo, getting money is all I'm about, if it aint about cheese it aint relevant to me, cause these days you ninja a get you for that paper, but I trust everybody in my circle my ninjas, I get out in June, so I'm finna do this little time and get right back to the hood and get on and do my thang.

-Mille

From The Beat: Many people these days are stressing about money... however, and yeah we edited. How long do you think it will be before you're back in Juvenile Hall? When do you turn eighteen? If you had to go legit, because someone needed you alive and free—what kind of work would you try and get?

Krazy's Last Words

My last words would be “heck with” the world! Cause I don't see nothing in life that's really worth cherishing cause nothing good lasts forever.

I really like what Mac Dre meant when he said life's a “—” and then you die. Cause that's true cause life's just full of problems so what I recommend to everyone is live life to the fullest cause you never know when is your last day.

-Krazy

From The Beat: You're right nothing (good or bad) lasts forever. Why is lasting forever the reason you would cherish something though? Sometimes it can be hard to lose what you love, but even so it's still worth cherishing. Life can be challenging for sure, and we hope that your ability to love makes it worth it.

Hungry Hunter

What's up wit it Beat? Today I aint really feelin the topics. I'ma write a lil some off of track. Well today I'm just thinking and waitin bout tomorrow. Can't wait for visiting time. My mom finna bring me some of that good Mexican food. Man, that's all I think about everything hahaha!

I'm sick and disgusted of the food they be feeding us. It be nasty most of the time. I think I rather eat tacos with beans and nopales for the 4 months that I'm gonna be up in here than this nasty food. well that's a lil some that's on mines for now. Til next time.

-Baby L

From The Beat: The system doesn't want you to relax and like it here, get your three meals and plan on staying! You are so lucky to have a good visit with homemade food. It's good to be taken care of by people who love you instead of in an institution. Don't forget that! What do you need to do with your life so that you never come back to this food again?

Mi Jefita

She is always there no doubt regardless what it was about she's the only homegirl I trust. My love for her always would last she always gave me what I need, without her I won't succeed...

-Traviesa

From The Beat: How is your relationship with her now? We expect she may be very worried about you and your future. Moms see who their kids can be and yet fear for them at the same time.

The Front Seat

Always losing points, why is my behavior here so bad? I wish I could cut my self in little pieces and build myself up with goodness. I wish I could follow in Jesus' footsteps. Why, why was I born like this?

Some kids act real good as if they already have their ticket to heaven. It seems like to me the bus of pain and no return. I's ready to give the front seat. Why? Why me? Help me-help me.

-Medication

From The Beat: We are hoping that since you signed yourself medication that it is something you're trying, and that it will help you feel more comfortable in your own skin if it's the right thing for you. Some days we're on the bus to heaven, and some days we're just on the bus! Hang in there, the important thing is you keep taking steps.

I'm Ready to do it Movin'

What's wit it? Man I've been having a bootsy week. I keep getting into trouble for stupid little stuff. People in here are getting away wit hella serious stuff and I'm getting taxed for petty stuff. The more I get into trouble for dumb stuff the less I care about this program.

All I wanna do is get money wit my patnas and just have fun and chill. I aint a trouble maker. I can't wait to touch down. These people in here think they run my life.

They just act like I gotta do what they say talk when they say talk, get up when they say get up like I'm some kinda dog or sucka or something. If I was on the outs that's wouldn't be happenin', aint nobody I don't know yoking me and runnin nothing.

I just wanna get money wit my boys, talk to girls and have fun. Is rappin 4 Tay an editor for The Beat I read he was in a magazine? But aight then I'm gone...

-Juice

From The Beat: When you enter the system you lose your rights to doing what you want, getting up when you want to, etc. etc. Don't forget that you don't like that when you are released. We're glad you're not a trouble maker, and hope you are talking about legit ways to get money with your boys, or else you may as well get used to being yoked.

How I Live

In the streets I'm a cold ninja thou shall not murder gone against the scripture. Looking death in the eye I tell em (what you wanna be when you grow up) a dope deala?

-Shawny D

From The Beat: Are you cold in the rest of your life-off the streets? We get the feeling from you that this life isn't making you happy. Who could you be? You can write, though we had to edit many of your lines because you incriminate yourself. What's the answer to the question you're asking here? What do you WANT to be?

I Want To Change

I want to change, but in all reality I aint going to. I like the way I am. I can't wait to get out of here. When I get out I'm gon go back to my hood. I will do anything for my hood.

-Twin

From The Beat: We edited your piece. Why would you put that information out there Twin? You say you want to change, so why give up? Maybe if you change your brother would follow you...some day. Maybe you'd have a future.

More Time

What's goin thru my mind today is that today Jan 28 was my release day after 120 days on sum dumb shh got me 4 more months in here but I'm just thinking dang if I was out today what would I be doin rite now? But I'ma do this time with my couple real friends that's left in here.

-Young Freako

From The Beat: You want to be sure that you figure out how to stay out once you get out. What would you be doing if you were out? Are you planning to finish school and get a job? What is something legal that you like to do for fun?



I Aint Feeling The Topics

Yea I don't know what to talk about so yea though I got like four more months and I'm gone man I'm getting tired of this shhh man same old food same exact thing every day so yea man I'll holla at ya later.

-Same Exact Thing

From The Beat: Four months will pass pretty quickly. Are you making plans that will give you a future where you won't know what will happen day to day, because it's growing and everything's always changing? Get as much school finished while you're there as possible.

Cutthroat Life

Mom and dad listen up cause I got a confession. I been in and out of jail but I still aint learn my lesson. As soon as I get out I'm out on the block maken sells, I didn't want y'all to know but it aint really hard to tell. Moms tell in me to grow up but I'm still riden big wheels.

24's two tone Speakers In da grill.
Ya'll didn't raise me like this.
Mom said don't hang around them
they gone bring you down,
Now I'm that kid the parents don't want they kids around.
Dad said go to school don't be no dummy
But I was like heck with that I gone go make some money
While kids was learnin math I was learnin how to bag rocks...

-Young Keak

From The Beat: What do you end up with? and what do the other kids, who went to math end up with? Are they in the next cell? Everyone likes money, it's true, but what is it really worth to you? Your freedom and future? How do you feel about yourself when you say "now I'm that kid the parents don't want they kids around." Why not just learn the lesson?

You Got Me

You a females that's confident, attractive, and smart. Will have the key to my heart, classy but hood, with a mentality like I wish a bz would, a real goon, never scared to fight, but loving, caring, and polite, joyful, respectful, success, stays looking cute, know how to dress. Damn girl looks like you're the one for me. Now, can open my eyes and see, baby we was meant to be...

-Lil' Phil

From The Beat: Hey how's Fouts? Write to us and let us know how you're all doing out there.

La Vida En El DF, México

¿Que onda raza? ¿Cómo estan las cosas allá afuera? Yo les a contar la vida de Mexico, DF. Ahí son puros rateros. No puedes salir a ningún lado porque te estan cuidando a que horas sales para robarte la cartera. Ahí matan a los perros y venden tacos de perros. ¿Como la ven raza?

Una vez quise ir para allá, pero no me gusto porque nomas andan robando a los probres, personas que apenas tiene para comprar su comida y andan trabajando para salir adelante.

From The Beat: Es increible pensar en lo desesperado que está la gente en el mundo por obtener dinero. Donde quieras que vayas a ir, la violencia y el hambre existe. ¿Alguna vez has pensado en alguna posibilidad que podría desminuir estos actos voilentos?

Life In DF, Mexico

What's up people? How are you out there? I'm going to share something about the life in DF, Mexico. People there are thieves. You can't go anywhere because they are watching you at all time to take your wallet. There, people kill dogs and sell them into tacos. How do you view this?

One time I went there, but I didn't like I because they rob poor people who work hard to succeed, and to at least bring food to their homes.

-Paco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's incredible to think how desperate people are in this world to obtain money. Wherever you go, violence and hunger exist. Have you ever thought about a solution to decrease these violent acts?

No Sabía

Pues yo le dije a mi novia que sabía cuando me iba a ir a Mexico. No sabía que la iba perder. Ahora ya no siento nada por ella, pero aveces siento algo.

From The Beat: Así son las cosas. Hay que aprender a ganar y a perder.

I Knew It

Well, I told my girl when I was leaving to Mexico. I didn't know I was going to lose her. Now, I don't feel anything about her, but sometimes I feel something for her.

-Edgar, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is how things are. You have to learn to win and lose.

Me Siento Mal Aqui

Bueno, les voy a contar lo muy mal que se siente al estar aqui encerrado. Ya tengo un mes sin ver a mis padres. Solo puedo hablar con ellos una vez a la semana.

Hoy en día les pongo muchas ganas para salir aelante y así cumplir mis metas. Ahora que me van a deportar, voy a ir a ver a mis jefes que tanto los quiero.

From The Beat: Que bueno que les hayas puesto ganas a salir adelane. ¿Cuales son tus planes?

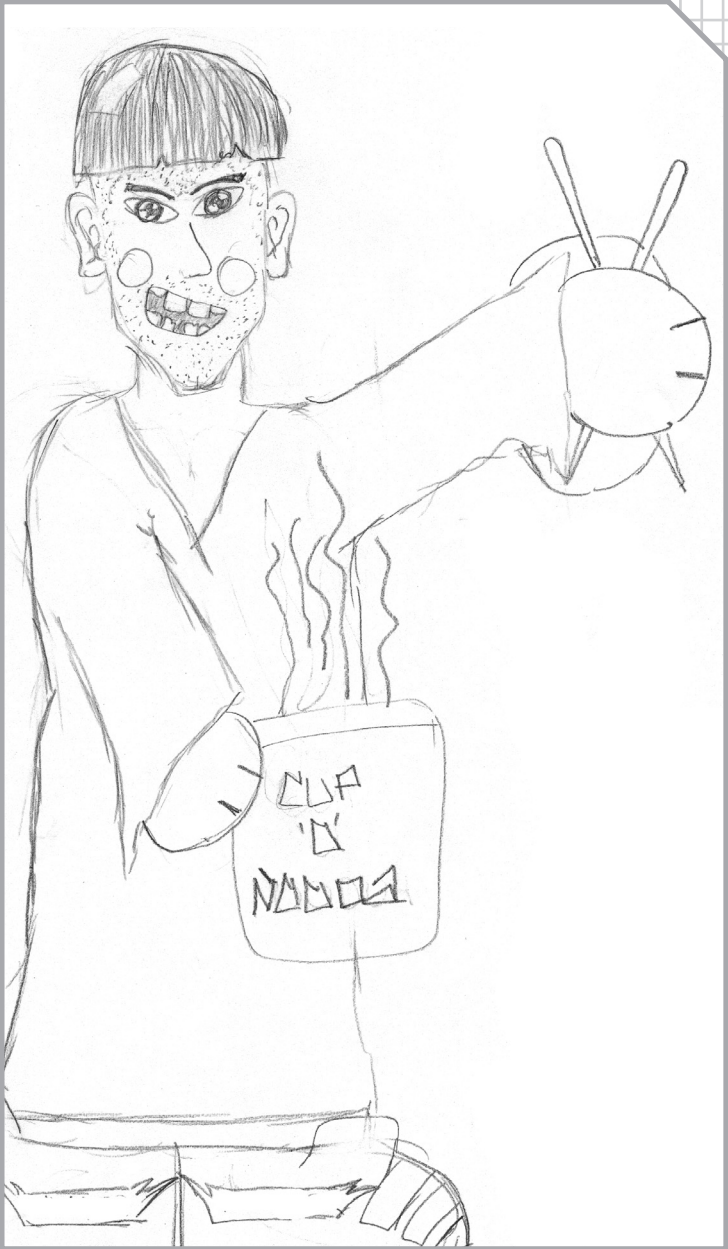
I Feel Bad In Here

Well, I'm going to share about how bad I feel being locked up. I have a month without being able to see my parents. I can only talk t them once a week.

Now I am making an effort to succeed and to accomplish my goals. Now, I am getting deported and I am going to see my parents who I love so much.

-Lil' Mayk, Marin

From The Beat: It's good that you still have the belief of succeeding in life. What are your plans?



Mi Jefa

No pasa un día que no pienso en ti. Espero que estes bien y también que estes feliz. Te prometo que voya tratar de cambiar y me la voy a llebar tranquilo. Te amo y espero que todavía me dejes quedarme contigo. Espero que Azucena se porte bien y que no de muchos problemas.

From The Beat: Esperamos que tu madre llegue a recibir tus palabras y que cumplas con tus promesas. Recuerda siempre este dicho, “nunca prometas algo que no lo puedas cumplir”

My Mother

I can't let a day pass without thinking of you. I hope you are OK and happy. I promise that I will try to change and be more calmed. I love you and I hope you let me stay with you. I hope Azucena behave well, and don't cause problems.

-Luis, Marin

From The Beat: We hope your mother gets your message and we hope you keep your promise. Always remember this saying, “never promise something you can't keep.”

Deje Todo Por Ellos

Yo deje a mi pais, a mi mama, a mis dos hermanos, y a mi novia. Los deje a ellos para juntar un dinero pero cai en las drogas. Empece a robar, a meterme en problemas y cai aqui. Aunque salga el 29 de Marzo.

Ahora el domingo que vino mi papa me dijo que quiere que me vaya para Mexico para cuidar a mi mama y a mis dos hermanos que son menores que yo ya que ellos están solos en Mexico. Llebo unos cuantos años en este pais y ahora que regrese le voy a decir esas palabras que por miedo o por meno a que piensen que soy devil no lo dije.

A mi familia y mi novia le digo “te amo.”

Ahora que estoy en la juvenile aprendi que no por decir un “te amo” a la persona te convierte en un covarde.

Todos mis homies me dicen que soy un joto noda mas por darle un abrazo y un beso en las quijadas a mi papa. Pero no me importa porque yo le estoy demostrando lo que nunca hice. Bueno,e ste fue un poco de mi vida. Al rato homies.

From The Beat: A lo mejor sera la mejor decisión que vuelvas a un lugar donde el peligro y las malas influencias sean menores. A lo mejor tu familia te necesitan allá para que los cuides como el único hombre despues de tu padre de la familia que eres. Y no, no es ser cobarde ni un homosexual al expresar tus sentimientos a las personas que uno ama. Olvida lo que la gente digan de ti o digan en general, y preocúpate en cuidar de aquellos quienes te necesitan.

I Left Everything For Them

I left my country, my mother, my two brothers and my girl. I left them to gain money, but I got into drugs. I started to steal, getting into trouble and end it up in here. I'm getting out March 29th.

Sunday my dad came and told me that he wants to send me back to Mexico to take care of my mother and my two younger brothers who are alone. I've been in this country a few years and when I go back there, I'm going tell them what I was afraid of saying to them.

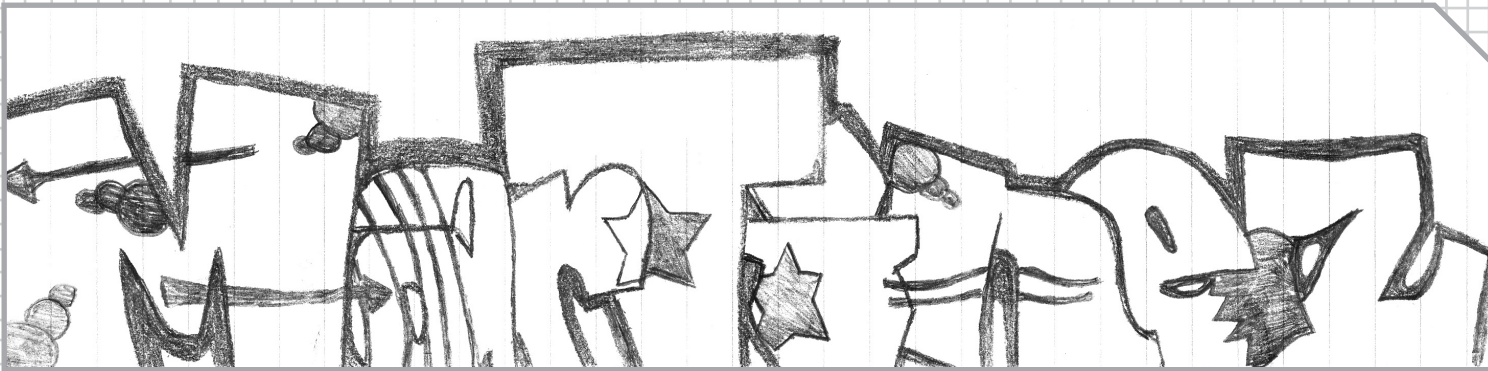
To my family and my girl, “I love you.”

Now that I am in juvenile hall I learned that by saying “I love you” to the people you love doesn't make you a coward.

All my homies tell me that I am gay because I gave my dad a kiss on his cheek and a hug. But, I don't care because I am showing something to him I didn't show before. Well this is a little something about my life. See you later, homies.

-Chino, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Maybe it's the right decision for you to go back to a place where danger and bad influence are minor. Maybe your family needs you there to take care of them, given the fact that you are the only man after your dad in the family. No, it's not being a coward or a gay to express your feelings to someone you love. Forget what people say in general, and start caring for those who need you.



No Puedo Regresar Atras

Hey Beat, le Saluda su homie Lil' Pelon de aqui. Es verdad que no me gustan los poemas de esta noche, pero esto es lo que siento. ¡Míralo!

Es verdad, me enamoré de ti cuando menos me lo esperaba

Quisiera que no fuera sierto

Pues mi pecho está cubierto de un dolor que no acaba

Hoy no puedo regresar atras y evitar esto que siento

Solo mírame un momento

Dime que nunca me dejaras por fuerte que fueran los vientos

Y quiereme como yo te estoy queriendo

Siente lo que estoy sintiendo, quiereme

Y quiereme que la vida y el pasado esta esperandote

A mi lado

Quiereme, y quiereme que el tiempo más bonito es cuando te necesito junto a mí

Y quiereme que quererte es muy distinto

Sólo marcamé el camino y quiereme.

Esto va para todos los que quieren realmente

A las personas que estan cautivas en Santa Clara Juvenile Hall.

From The Beat: Que Linda dedicación! Parece que esta muchacha te ha robado tu inspiración y tus pensamientos. ¿La pregunta, es como va a quererte si tú no estas ahí para que te quiera?

I Can't Go Back To The Past

Hey Beat, this is your homie Lil' Pelon. It's true that I don't like tonight's topic, but this is how I feel. Check this out!

It's true. I fell in love with you when I least expected

I wish it wasn't true

My chest is covered with a pain that doesn't have an end

I can't go back to the past and avoid what I feel

Just take a look at me for a moment

Tell me that you would never leave me even if the wind was blowing hard

And love me the way I am loving you

Feel what I am feeling, love me

Love me that life and the past is waiting for you by my side

Love me, and love me because time is

More beautiful when you're with me

And love me because this love is different

Just mark me the directions and love me

This is to all who really love someone

To the people who are captivated in Santa Clara Juvenile Hall.

-Lil' Pelon, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a nice dedication! It seems like this girl has stolen your inspiration and thoughts. The question is, how is she going to love you if you're not there for her to love you?

Will Californians Just Say “No!” To The Failed War On Drugs?

When it comes to prisons, Los Angeles County is the bottomless well that just keeps on giving; feeding the system's voracious, beastly appetite. No other county is affected by California's failed penal model more than the County of Angels, which contributes to over two-thirds of the state prison system.

Latinos are impacted most severely, topping the inventory list, with Blacks trailing not far behind in the dark dust. Mirroring the rest of the nation, most prisoners are male, between the ages of 25 and 47, ripe and in their prime. Over 25,000 of these political “strange fruit” are lifers; the victim- spoils of “holocaust” politics pushed by tough-on-crime showmanship and barbaric mandatory sentencing schemes that countless courts and criminal justice experts condemn.

Adding to the injustice is the fact that, according to the Los Angeles-based Drug Policy Institute, and other respected prison reform experts such as New York's nonpartisan Sentencing Project, 85% of all arrestees' offenses were drug related. 85 percent! That's fairly consistent from coast to coast. Yet less than 10 percent are offered drug-detox, substance abuse rehab, or toxicity education.

With appalling discrepancies like these, even a brain that misfires could deduce why California has the highest return-to-prison rate in the country -- 69 percent recidivate. California also has the highest cost per prisoner -- at \$93,000 a year figuring in AB 900; the most massive prison expansion plan in history, soon to add 53,000 prison and jail beds to ease overcrowding.

Overall, one-in-four Californians know someone on drugs. As it stands, California's motto might as well be: "Use drugs, go to prison!" In fact, that seems the American way. As a Generation X life prisoner I can only read about the success stories of yesteryear. How in the '60s and '70s, California was the envy of the nation with its marquee universities and its proud, constructive prison system, with a \$10 billion annual budget today, our 33 mackerel-gray prisons, dotting across the state terrain like a land-based archipelago, not only far out number universities but eclipse higher education in funding as well.

In contrast, right across the border to the south, Mexican President Felipe Calderon took the spotlight in early October in both human rights and human care. El Presidente defied the red, white and blue by abandoning the gringo failed policy of criminalizing small amounts of drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. Mr. Calderon stated that addicts should be treated as patients in need of help, not criminals. (Maybe he watches Dr. Phil or Oprah, too.)

After 30 years of failed drug policies, a defeated war on drugs, and 2.2 million American citizens behind bars, perhaps it's time that America got "smart on crime" -- particularly in regard to its substance abuse policies. I mean, really, how many people are locked away behind warped bravado instead of clear thinking? "Tough" is not always a panacea.

Meanwhile, the California prison system is bursting at the seams with overcrowding. There are over 170,000 prisoners crammed in lock ups designed for half that number. And the cost of incarceration has increased on average about \$1 billion a year for the past decade. The federal courts are closing in on the beleaguered system for inadequate prisoner health care, mental health deficiencies and obscene dental neglect. Not surprisingly, California has the highest suicide rate in the nation.

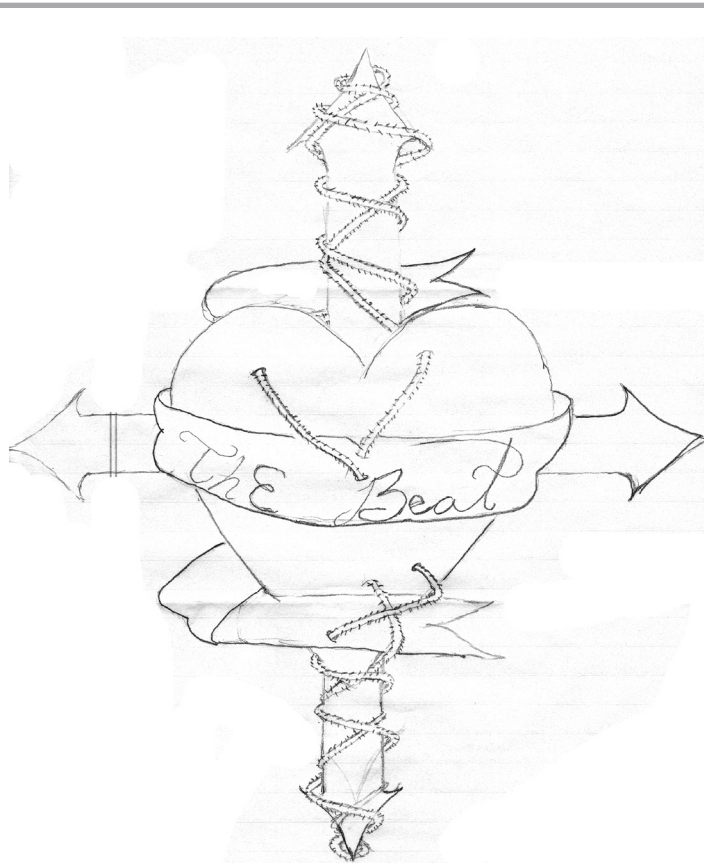
Still, Californians can once again be a leader in "corrections," at least in its approach to combating drug demand: Perhaps not as dramatic as outright decriminalization but in treatment; treatment of the sick, not incarceration, deprivation and neglect--which has done nothing but exacerbate the problem.

Our next writer has been spilling knowledge throughout the pages of our publication for quite some time now. He's always coming through with some empowering articles and advocating for a lot of the fellas that are locked up in Prison right now. Dorte! even has his writings posted on the internet at www.prisonradio.org. Writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Lancaster, CA, Dorte! reaches out to everyone, young or old, to spread knowledge and facts about politics and prison life!

Californians will have a grand and historic opportunity come November 4 -- particularly the 10 million Los Angelinos (nearly a third of the state population) should they vote in sufficient numbers to reverse the wreckage; and repair the community collateral damage by approving Proposition 5: The Non-Violent Offender Rehabilitation Act of 2008. Proposition 5 would expand the successes of Proposition 36-- the 2000 drug diversion initiative, approved by 61 percent of the electorate-- that gives nonviolent substance abusers a fair shot at rehabilitation instead of the slammer.

According to the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst Office, Proposition 36 saves tax-payers over \$1 million a year. Proposition 5 builds on that success by expanding rehabilitation to the vast majority of state prisoners, and explicitly bringing drug rehab inside the prison walls where it is so sorely needed. Following a recent review of Proposition 5, the Legislative Analyst Office concluded that the revolutionary measure would be a win for tax- payers and prisoners, saving between \$1 and \$3 million a year. By this approach, California's notorious recidivism rate would decrease significantly, and by giving discretion back to the courts at sentencing, the state's persistent overcrowding problem would be dealt a devastating one-two-punch.

Once again it's time for the savvy California electorate to upstage their sleeping Congressional representatives and show them what they really want: sensible, humane crime policies that are proven and give offenders a pragmatic path back into society and their communities where they belong.



Yes! On Proposition 5

With all the sour news about failures, prisons and financial--finally, there's an initiative that is prudent, fair and offers to actually reverse the growing costs of prisons. Initiated by the Drug Policy Institute, Proposition 5: The Non-Violent Offender Rehabilitation Act of 2008, would improve on the successes of Prop. 36 (of 2000, approved by 61% of you), and expand drug treatment programs for the substance addicted, including youth.

Apart from Prop. 36, California's response to the state's drug epidemic has been to simply lock people up. The non violent with the violent youths with adults; creating a caldron of chaos and destructive delirium behind the walls. Once inside, little or no assistance is offered to help them overcome.

As should be expected, once released they fail, they recidivate, hamster-wheeling in a circle of failure, crime, and cost--until their third slip-up. Then they become permanent wards of the state under Three Strikes. Not only are these policies immoral but also telling as to why California has the highest recidivism rate in America. It also reveals why Californian's pay the highest rate per bed than any other state-- between \$40,000 and \$90,000 a year.

Frankly, with 90 prisons, jails and penal camps overseeing 300,000 prisoners and parolees, California

cannot sustain this social and monetary drain. The state prison budget is currently about \$10 billion, with expected cost overruns if the pattern holds. Since around 2005 the prison budget has been lined upwards about \$1 billion a year, and from fiscal 2007 to 2008 it jumped a whopping \$2 billion.

That said, and given the state and national financial crisis, Californians need every opportunity to stave off the drain. Prop. 5 offers those savings, millions on top of what Prop. 36 already saves (\$1 million annually); and an immeasurable moral salvation on your part for the hundreds of thousands of souls who simply needed help. According to the Legislative Analysts Office, Prop. 5 could save you between \$1 and \$3 million a year.

Still, California cannot continue rolling roughly along in fiscal and human failure. We're taking a step backward. To close the budget deficit--this time-- \$19 million was cut from Medi-Cal, \$7 million was slashed from food stamp recipients, and \$6 million was snatched from underneath mental health care patients. And still, millions more are expected to be excised without a drop of anesthesia.

In contrast, billions are steadily being added to this failed prison model. This must change, and come November 4 Californians can say it loudly and clearly-- "Yes on reform, yes on Proposition 5!"

Dangerous Cellmate

Chops has gone nuts. On any day you can hear him yelling and screaming unintelligibly. In fact, at all times of the day you can hear him yelling and screaming from his cell. He makes loud, primitive, guttural sounds; like a wild man, especially on lockdowns when he can't get out of his cell. He shares an extremely small cell with another man, an incredibly patient man.

There's another prisoner who stands in the shower, says a fella I'll call Jack DeWalt. "He hits and beats on himself until he draws blood." DeWalt told an officer who apathetically sent him to another officer, who, in turn went him to another officer. "They don't really care," says DeWalt. "It really hurt me to see that man doing that to himself." Mental illness and inadequate medical care are pervasive throughout the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Prior to taking charge of the medical wing of prison system last year, now former federal receiver Robert Sillen found that an average of one prisoner per month was needlessly dying due to neglect.

In July 2007 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals appointed a three judge panel to also intervene in the custody department. A dramatic move, no doubt, after over a decade of unfulfilled court orders and nudges to reduce the population. We're talking about a \$9 billion debacle, with 172,000 prisoners crammed and stuffed in the space designed for half that. In his order confirming the intervention, Justice Thelton Henderson, of the Northern District Court, said: "The court has given the department every reasonable opportunity to bring its prison medical system up to constitutional standards, and it is beyond dispute that the state has failed."

The incarcerated mentally ill aren't just a danger to themselves, but also to the many others imprisoned with

them. To make matters worse, prison officials have no qualms about mixing them with the general population—even to the detriment of themselves. Just the other day one of the brothers I attend church with shared a rather disquieting but not-so-surprising story about a really disturbed man he was forced to share his cell with.

My brother Sean, we'll call him, had come in early from the yard one day while dayroom was open inside the housing unit. His cell partner, Craig, which sounds like a good name to call him, walked about, looking nervous and stranger than usual. Sean noticed the oddity but simply set his suspicions on the back shelf of his mind.

Moments later Craig attacked a guard. Of course, that was cause to suspend the program for the night. When Sean returned to his cell he noticed that his personal property had been rifled through. He also noticed that all of his candy had been eaten, wrappers all over the place. And Craig's personal belongings were neatly packed in bags, ready to go. It was apparently all planned. As if that weren't enough, Craig had poured water in Sean's TV.

Later Sean learned that Craig had a history of turning on his cell partners, accusing them of stealing from him. He would attack them out of the blue and destroy their personal property. Not long after, Craig was released from the hole. Of course, he wasn't liable for his actions because, well, he's mentally ill. Unfortunately such immunity isn't available for those he's housed with. Craig was eventually assigned to share a cell with a fella we call Bam.

Bam wasn't warned of Craig's violent proclivities. Within just a few weeks Craig was accusing him of messin' in his stuff, and other outlandish accusations. Craig eventually attacked Bam, swinging violently at him. Of course, Bam defended himself. While prison officials may not care, the feds apparently have had enough. Never have I seen the so-called criminal element so eager for the feds to come.

Honor Yard Working

(Published in Antelope Valley Press on Sept. 21, 2007)
It isn't often that prisoners can claim any victories. By the very nature of incarceration, we're losers. We've failed ourselves, our families, and society. And in prison, failures of the state conspicuously bear our name, regardless of how little control we have over the circumstance of our confinement or policies made in Sacramento. So bear with me as I brag a little.

Back in 2000, several prisoners here at the state prison resolved to make something of ourselves. With the tacit backing of some progressive staff, the prisoners developed peer support groups, positive programs and classes. Here, the educated teach the unlearned, the strong encourage the weak, and the talented spread their gifts like an academic potluck. We call it the Honor Yard.

Here, we agree to random drug testing. We're not separated by gang membership, and everyone strives to get along. In this maximum-security setting, we haven't had one major incident since the inception of the program, a claim not even lower-level penitentiaries can make.

Last year 12 prisoners earned their General Equivalency Diplomas and earned an associates degree out of his own pocket, with outside support. We expect the numbers to increase this year. The Honor Yard was recently granted permission to donate five of our acrylic paintings to the Special Olympics in Beijing.

We've also earned the backing of the Legislature for SB 299, or the Honor Yard bill, introduced by state Sen. Gloria Romero earlier this year. The bill would require the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to live up to its name by spreading such voluntary yards to every Maximum-Security Prison.

There's no question the current model has failed, miserably. Would you rather have prisoners released from facilities where they mutually support each other's success or from facilities where thick negativity thrives and 79% of prisoners are likely to return? Effective prisons can reform prisoners, and this is a win for everybody. Check us out at prisonhonorprogram.org and then urge the governor to sign the upcoming bill.

Effective prisons can reform prisoners, and this is a win for everybody.

A Plea for Rehabilitation

It's always a teeth-gritting experience for reform-minded prisoners to see parolees get out and commit new crimes. Their failures are a black eye to the multiplied others who strive against the destructive prison culture that is fostered by a cycle of political showmanship.

Imagine prisoners fighting-- for rehabilitation: writing mountains of letters to the legislature, praying for common sense intervention and aid to change their lives. Picture a slew of prisoners who actually get it and volunteer to mentor others, donate their time and personal funds for community causes. That is what you have right here in Antelope Valley at the state prison in Lancaster, called the Honor Yard.

In contrast there were deadly and resource-gouging racial riots throughout the Los Angeles County Jails. There were all-out riots at the state prisons in San Diego, Pleasant Valley, Chino -- where one officer was killed in an isolated incident, and a number of other penal facilities, all within tragic memory. But not here in Lancaster. Millions of tax dollars have been saved. Scores of lives improved. And the threat of release from those who come from this volunteer program is greatly reduced.

The legislature had it right when they overwhelmingly passed the bill SB 299, introduced by Sen. Gloria Romero with bipartisan support, to make such programs available throughout the state. It was the governor who dropped the ball when he vetoed it. Help him pick it back up by visiting www.prisonhonorprogram.org and www.prisonradio.org/Dortell-HonorYard.htm before it's too late.

ANWAR ANDRELLA PROSPER

Look What It's Got Me!

First and foremost I would like to start by saying that I am an avid reader of all" literature I.E: poems, short stories, books, periodicals, The Wall Street Journal, etc.

My 2nd (and God willing last) time around with my 2nd consecutive sentence will not be in vain. Granted, I did manage to remain on the opposite side of the fence for approximately 4 1/2 before my subsequent re-entry several months ago. I am well aware of the circumstances of my crime and the inevitable consequences of life in the Pimp-Prostitution game. In retrospect, some, or shall I say maybe the vast majority, of your readers can relate to my demise.

My case was the product of a 2-year investigation. A joint effort nationwide STING, courtesy of The Houston, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Miami, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Minnesota, FBI and other state and federal law enforcement entities.

Never the one to preach, but I say this to all players, macks, pimps and hustlers, real, wannabe or otherwise: The GAME of playing females is a lucrative one, however, I received a 10 year sentence accused of compelling prostitution, benefiting from the proceeds of prostitution, trafficking a minor under the age of 18 across state lines to promote prostitution etc.

These people are not playing about this business any more!

Our next writer is dropping a few lines out of a Correctional Facility in Beeville, Texas. He's a first time writer with a lot of knowledge and good advice to offer. Anwar was caught up in the game, as many might have experienced, and his game (nothing we support or encourage) was mackin' or better yet known as pimpin'. And doing what he was doing got him where he's at today, which is not a place where you want to be. So we're honored to have Anwar drop words of advice on the pages of our publication. WE look forward to his next contribution, maybe he'll tell us what the new Anwar plans with his life upon touching down...?

The time that's being dished out is unbelievably draconian. Some of the guys in my sting were handed down sentences as paltry as 5 years and as much as 45 to 100 years in the FEDS. Real talk. In addition, there is no honor amongst thieves and a lot of us are statistical victims of snitches turning states evidence.

My actions and contribution run the spectrum. I am not acting like I am totally innocent because I am not. Although I was kind of screwed on this case. Nonetheless, emancipating myself from mental slavery is my daily regimen. I attend school, work, and whatever else the powers-that-be demand of me in this grand industrial complex.

Also, I am not glorifying nor encouraging any of you young cats to do what I did. But I have been there and done that. If you choose to be a pimp, mack, etc, my sole advice is, and platinum recording artist Young Jeezy said it best, "Don't Get Caught!"

To My Youngsters

I have so very much to say that, I don't know where to begin. First, you youngsters cannot and must not pattern your lives after fictional lyrics in rap songs or things you see in a "John Singleton" Movie. What I mean is that, now-a-days just about every rapper is telling a tale through cleverly arranged words about a life-style of "selling drugs, shooting people, having prostitutes, smoking and having huge amounts of pot," etc.

Well, November 21, I turned 40 years old and am on the last ten months of my fifth prison term. I've been to about ten different prisons and/or sub-facilities throughout California, since January of 1990: Chino (East, West and Central), Soledad (North and Central), High Desert State Prison (B, D and A Yards), Wasco (3 Yard), Susanville (Lassen and Cascade Yards), "New" Folsom (C and B Yard), Tehachapi (A Yard and Level-2), Avenal (Level-2) and Delano. I have never once seen, met or ran into one of the rap thugs I see on TV or in videos! How is it possible that these wild people have lived 20 years or more shooting people, smoking pounds of pot, and selling all these narcotics without once having been arrested and convicted?

Sure, I see them in court on the news for doing stupid things "after" they're already famous but, what about their whole life before they made CD's and videos. Myself and just about everyone I know who have done and experienced the things these guys rap about have had numerous contacts with the law and the courts!

Someone is not being totally truthful. You must be informed-there are huge corporations behind these labels (manufacturers and distributors) like Sony, BMI, EMI, and others who market certain images to you youngsters because it's very profitable; the same type of imagining that tobacco companies used with the cartoon camel character, trying to get younger kids to smoke.

Don't get me wrong, I love rap-even some of the rap that others think is negative, but only because I've actually lived and experienced some of the ills mentioned in the verses. As an adult, I'll never allow a song or music to pump me up to behave or feel a certain way that contradicts truth and

Our next writer has really kicked off some knowledge for you readers out there. Big Mike has been there and did it as his rap sheet is long enough to consist of him spending a huge amount of time incarcerated. Big Mike feels obligated to reach out to the youth out there because he doesn't want to see the new generation be blind to the facts. Mike does a great job of pointing out what the consequences for the decisions that we all make. He said it best everybody sees the flashy cars, jewelry and women, but nobody sees the 22 to 24 hour lockdown, the riots, the fights, the blood spilling. There is no glory in that! Writing to us from a California State Prison Sacramento (Folsom SHU), in Represa, CA, Big Mike has a Big Message for all you readers out there!

my reality.

The reason I caution the youngsters about its influence is because I myself (as a teen) could not read clearly at times the true consequences of my acts. As a "G", I understand that myself and others of my age group were not there for you guys to help mold and shape, who you were to become, and for that I apologize. But one thing is certain, the traps that have been laid out for you guys are far worst than what was in store for us when "we" made the same or similar mistakes. Just look at the sentencing laws and some of the new stuff they're coming with.

You've got to pump your own brakes YG's, and find the true meaning of love, family and self, 'cause when it all comes down and the smoke clears nobody will be there for you but Mom's and your family. You have to be just as serious about what you want out of life as you are or were about banging, slanging or whatever else got you in trouble. Be willing to make an investment in "yourself" by getting your GED going to City College or even opening your own business. You can do it, if you're true to it.

You may see the "Denali's and Yukon's on 24" spinners and all the other flashy things but, what you don't see is the price you have to pay when you're caught. The other side, the riots, the having to constantly watch your back, the 22 hours a day I spend in my cell in the S.H.U. (10 hours per week outside time). Nothing is worth this. I am willing to give up and sacrifice whatever I have to not to do this ever again.

You guys all have a choice. Ask yourself this question; if I were to die today what would the world be missing? Keep your head up so your "crowns" won't fall off!

CHARLIE SCHWARM

Charlie Schwarm aka Jumpy has been a part of our publication for a very long time now. Jumpy has always been coming through with great poetry, and wisdom to spread to you readers out there. Not just a leader in his own mind but Jumpy creates ways to get his message and point across. He hasn't lost a touch of his creativity as he dishes to us his latest poem. Writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran California, give it up for Jumpy as he's back with a couple pieces to let you know what it is going on through his mind.

Love's hope

A prayer to the air floats off a thought
This lonely love's hope- hot
One speak is all it takes to light a flame inside
Fire and ice deep in the soul is where I hide
Like the tide, smooth and ruff emotions run
Love's hope, sea, earth, moon and sun
My kisses to you on a breeze
I send one you cannot see
Love's hope, with you it's free
Crazy pleasure is what I treasure the most
Your love's hope.... Coast to coast.

My Beat Within

The light inside shines strong creating beats within
We live and learn through everything we do, lose and win
To this game of life we're all kin though were brown, white and black

The human soul has no color, I see through eyes of purity
Beats within shines bright humans glow is all I see
Captivity of the free set loose by the beat

On my every thought you dine, my treat
The street is where we take it for, because it's all we know
Tattooed tears brought on by dead many years, ho-ho-ho
Budda's luck is like a clover for the four-leaf we search
Shifting shapes, bells and whistles, one people, the player, one church

Many divided weakens the beat within each and every one
Come together in tune, the earth, moon, and sun
Basic instructions given as a child seems to fade away
A world with no law when the corrupt thrive, is that ok?
Questions without answers, who, what, when, where and why?

All I know is, The Beat Within must never die.

Keep Living

Hard times have always come along
No matter what
I've always been in the wrong
Ups and down
No way around
But I keep living and keep breathing
God keeps me around for a good reason
Still wonder why and for what?
All I know is I keep living
Even though I've had enough
Still strive in life
And wonder what's the meaning
Keeping my head up high and believing
A lot of times it could have been the end for me
But God has shielded and protected me
Spared me and allowed one more breath
To let me live instead of death
My legs still work
My heart still yearns
My eyes still see
I am still me
I am still here
Living while waiting
For love to be near
Why am I still alive?
Years have gone by
But I've only laid my heart on one woman
Because I've loved her and from the beginning I knew it
My heart is still alive and I keep living another day
As much as each day hurts
I breathe all I can before it's too late
A whole year has passed by
With my heart mourning each night
Still thankful that I'm alive
I keep living and have not died
Still in search for that flight
Waiting to go home to my wife
I keep living and I will shut my eyes
And still wake up after tonight.

Entered My Lungs

Why did it ever enter my lungs?
How it took me over and I thought it was fun
Used to say, "I can quit any time"
How wrong was I?
I don't want to, but I love it
I want it and I need it
How it entered my lungs
Every morning, to wake me up
Every day, whenever my lungs needed some
Every night, to allow me to sleep
I inhaled the last one
I miss it so much
My lungs scream for it
But it gets none
How it relaxed me in time of pain
Something I deeply want to regain
Why did I ever start?
How it seems like we will never part

Lil' Roach wrote for The Beat from San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center until ten months ago, when he was transferred to Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania. At Glen Mills he has earned his GED and a shop certificate in video, and was planning to go home on a home pass at Winter break. We hope Lil' Roach will continue to write The Beat Within as he graces our pages with some heart-felt and inspiring writing.

It's For You, Mom

For so long I have searched for success
Even though I went through hard times and distress
For years I have done nothing
Always making mistakes, always running
But now it's done
This... it's for you, Mom!

I have made you mad
I have made you sad
I've done everything a kid my age shouldn't had
I've made you cry
And to you I have lied
My teenage struggles are done
And this... it's for you, Mom!

Been in and out; gone back and forth
Five months is the most I've been out
All to represent (my neighborhood)
I've made you worry
And I've tried to grow up in a hurry
Tried to make a man out of a son
But this... it's for you, Mom!

You've seen it before
Me saying I'll change and go back to the worst
Never knew if I would make it through the night
Never knew if I would fail or survive
But I've proved that wrong
Because this... it's for you, Mom!

I'm sorry for everything I've done
I know it was wrong
I'm sorry for all this pain that I've caused
I love you and the good is soon to come
Because this diploma
That I'm gonna hold in my hand for so long
Yes... it's for you, Mom!

It seems like I would never let it go
Each time I think about it
It makes me want it more and more
The pure white cloud
Floating all around
I clench my teeth, shut my eyes
That smell, a smell that makes me want to cry
That smell, so strong and so great
A smell that puts me in a lachrymose state
Why did it ever enter my lungs?
How I regret inhaling that first one
Now, not having it, it debilitates me
Don't know what to do
But right now I need it more than ever
One, just one, would put me back together
Take it away from me? Never
I choose when to stop, when I'm ready
Not knowing if I would really stop
Or let it burn with me forever.

Reactivate the Cause

Dear all people of color, much love and solidarity. Greetings today with the holidays upon us, behind and outside the raze wire plantation.

I wish to open not only the eyes of our youth, but all the oppressed people of the world. People, it is NEVER right to do wrong or to requite wrong with wrong, or when we suffer, it's to defend ourselves by doing evil in return. However, people, given today's harsh realities, the need to organize and reactivate the movement is much greater now than 30-40 years ago, and this is threatening to get worse because in the near future a crisis is approaching that will unnerve and cause this government to tremble for their very safety of this country.

The reason why is because the civility of no race can be perfect while another race is degraded. This is a doctrine alike of the oldest and of the newest philosophy, that man is one and that you cannot injure any member without sympathy to all the members of that race. The result of this is the destruction of our families and communities. We must, more so than ever, reactivate the struggle and emancipating our freedom fighter will be no easy task. We depict this phenomenon to statistically and in terms to intellectually clear cut to represent the vague moods of an entire community.

So, my dear youth and all oppressed people of the world, we must not only reactivate the true cause, we must have culture- allegiance which will help create a positive harmony for the people. This will only come from our true freedom fighters. But if we look deeper we'll see how this very process is the only course to take. Here in the U.S. we often boast about people of color having more and more

Our next writer is an intelligent man and should be a motivational speaker by the way he just sits and writes these speeches. But real talk Anthony's piece filled with some intellectual writing is just trying to send a message for all the youth out there to unite as one, no matter what race, religion, etc. Let's help each other out and take this system down! And he couldn't have said it any better. Writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Vacaville, CA, Anthony is giving us a cause to fight for! LISTEN UP!

political power in local, state, and federal government. Yet I ask you people, if this is so, then why are the lives of the people so miserable, so threatened, so endangered?

Why? I'll tell you, because these so-called people of government have confused us with their presence, not their power. So once again, we must reactivate the struggle and get our youth to understand that politics is great for changing forms, but it stumbles at changing people's basic essentials. See, people, at the very bottom, politics are the elevation of symbol over substance.

Why, it seeks to create the illusion of change but leaving it unchanged. This is essential power-relations, which is al the lowest level of our so-called society. But the real truth of the matter is, as you and I know, a great financial element has owned the government of the U.S. since day one.

So, in closing, let me repeat. Unity is the state of being one. Most of us want it, because in unity there is strength. So let us reactivate our cause to its truest form. Because here in the U.S. and all over the world, we must always struggle to get our youth to focus on the reactivation of cause and to always remember our aim to unity for all people is not simply for unity's sake but to set and reach goals for all oppressed people of the world. Let our unity be to win whatever battle we take up. Dare to struggle. Dare to win. Knowledge is power.



Evil Dreams

Was it all a dream?
In the morning will I die before I wake?
I ask the Lord if I have to go,
My soul please Lord "you" take
I'm lost in this dirty game but I'm winning,
My mother tells me change 'cause she knows I'm sinning
And that's how I know I'm dreaming 'cause my momma dead
And I shed so many tears for my daddy when he fled
But a man gotta do what he gotta do
Hopefully the road that he choose don't end on him too
I moved down the street life with my heat tight 'cause I'm shivering
It's cold outside playboy, ya' dig
I try to open my eyes but they ain' letting me
I pray to the Lord that He help me.
'Cause my daughters don't deserve to have a deadbeat dad
And my wife don't deserve to have her husband dead
Tears I've shed
'Cause the pains too great
But I'll make it through this evil dream and awake one day.

Our next writer, use to write for our publication in our workshops, but as many do, lost touch with us due to his crazy life in and outside of these walls. Bouncer comes through with some outstanding writing as he delivers a poem about his "Evil Dreams" that encourage him to stick with his evil ways. In a battle between evil and trying to do good, Bouncer let's us know his struggles, and his plans to overcome them. Sending us his poem from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy California, Bouncer let's us in on the journey of his "Evil Dreams."

The Beat

First, allow me to extend my utmost love in your direction! Well, it's been to cool minute since you heard from me. I know, I know but aye, life is crazy for me on the outside of these walls. I'm glad to see that The Beat is still alive and strong! I hope that you guys allow me to jump back into the action as well receive The Beat once again! I'm in a dying need of focus in my life at this time. Man, it's crazy how life is a roller coaster! You could have it all together one day then the next it could all be taken from you!

But I never let my headrest in the mud. I keep pushing, pick myself up and dust myself off. Try again you, feel me? I'm back on a new term. This is my third prison term. When or if I get out I'll have had my prison number 10 years and I'll be 28. Crazy how time just fly's when your having fun isn't it? But always I'll let you go. I hope all is well for you. God bless.

Help Me, Lover

Stuck on a deserted jail landscape [per. my mind],
with not even Mr. Willson to talk to
Hey lover, come rescue me
I sent a signal to you
Hey lover, where are you?
I wrote your name across the sky, letter's 10" feet tall.
I wished on our flying star
But, like you
It was far away from me
Please come back
Without you girl, my life span isn't that deep
Detached for so long, it's like you were a figment of my imagination
But, our first kiss still makes my lips quiver
And I'm not gone speak on the thought's of my cold shivers
You're what keeps me brand new
It's kind of sick how I'm stuck on you. [No Pun intended]
You took over my soul
I've been on my knee's waiting and they're bloody red
You're that far away distant light at my tunnel
And I'll be waiting!
I love you.

Captive

Ooh, you got me spinnin' around- the embrace- oh so sweet!
Giving in to you, directly on a, not even a lot of bit limb
The combining of our heart beats faster than the air coming in and out
Rarer than love at first sight
Prize in my eye's from the Kodak
Perfect #1 love of my life I will not doubt
Always be a prisoner on yo' ship
Never to be released, to face a lovesick hardship...
Under the single's sea.

Roman Stone

Time and time again everything always seems to change
My one-way-ride to a dead-end of heartache and pain

I don't pray for angels to come down to fix my broken home
I simply wish for that one woman whose love is as strong as roman stone

Maybe I should pray for those wings of solitude and light,
After all this chaos and loneliness what would it hurt, right?

Even though it's impossible to make it out of life alive,
Why does every woman I love just seem to fade away and die?

I've drank myself down, got track marks to hide the dust
Blew away all the memories as I consumed myself in lust

How many more nights do I have to swim in my own sweat?

Our next writer has dazzled the pages of our publication numerous times before. Contrite delivers masterful poems every time he writes as his words cut deep like swords piercing through a knight's shining armor. Contrite is not often published but when he is you can tell that his writings separate him from the writings of others. Writing to us from a Correctional Facility in San Bernardino, CA, our boy Contrite delivers exceptional writing once again!

*A nightmare, in a reflection of
lifeless eyes staring sightless
back at me?*

Recipe For Disaster

Images of my life scene, lodged in my brain like pieces of jagged glass
At any given moment a blinding spotlight could hit anyone of those images
Transporting me back there, plaguing me with the acrid, sour smell of terror
Searing my organ's, melting the edge's of my brain
Holding my breath in anticipation of what would come next
A nightmare, in a reflection of lifeless eyes staring sightless back at me?
Assessing myself with a critical eye, another statistic?
Naw, but it ain't a sunny outlook either
More so like, having cracked ribs on a stretching device
But, I am a vision, a mythical creature
Exotic, a dream to reality in its image's
Like something reaching out of a black water canal for help but, it's far too late to come
Eyes bloodshot red, like rupturing veins and arteries
Panic gripping my throat choking
But I'm frighteningly well adjusted
I bought it all!

RALPH OFFIELD

It's not too often that Ralph Offield graces the pages of The Beat. But when we're lucky, he sends us a piece of his very expressive writing. In the following piece Ralph compares a woman's love to that of a "Roman Stone." And he let's us know about his sorrows and mistakes. But one thing is certain, Ralph is ready to give love a try. Writing to us from Western Missouri Correctional Center Cameron, MO, check Ralph out as he expresses himself with elegance.

To keep myself from drowning in my own pool of self pity and regret

Sometimes I think if second best is all I have
Then second best it is
I'll love that woman regardless
And help raise another man's kids.

One of my greatest fears is to be old and all alone,
Just staring out at nothing as that nothing wraps its chill around my tired old bones...

To the woman who reads this whose face has yet to be shown,
Maybe it's your name that should be etched under mine in the wall of roman stone.

Incarcerated

Brick walls, fences, and razor wire
criss-crossed in a bind
Feelings overlooked
'cause remorse is the punishment of crime
No warmth lives here but the wind that chilled
Where it's a lot of counterfeit
'cause fake outweigh the real
Not always behind walls and locked doors while doing time
But in the outside world, incarcerated in the mind
Not always what it seems, sometimes a blessing
Only what you make of it, not always unpleasant
A learning experience that's strongly reckoned with
A chapter of one's life that'll never just shift
Forever with you, they're all the way to the end
But what will you gain? Strength? Or will you bend?

*Clouds, fog, and sunny days
in the lenses I use to see
I just wish you could see them
So you can see what I see
Pieces of me.*

Wondering

I wonder if I'm loved and who really cares
I wonder if I'm treasured like gold and if I'm rare
I wonder what's real and what is fake
I wonder what's love and what is hate
I wonder about life and thought about death more
I wonder about both but carry the mentality of a storm
Family and friends are what I think about 24 hours a day
Wondering who's here for me and who's here for play
I wonder about love and if I'll ever find it again
I wonder about my life and if it's gonna' end before it begins
I wonder 'bout me as a king and if I'll ever find my queen
I wonder about a lot but will I just continue to dream?
I know I'm a young boss and doors will open up for me soon
But 'til then, I'll be that star that glides across the moon
Darkness of the sky and shine of the golden sun
A crowned king that'll always remain number one.

Your Faithful Lover

I will be your faithful lover
Everyday when I wake up
I will talk to you about love
And from the garden

I will bring you a rose
And kiss you everyday
And caress your body
All nights when you go sleep

I will hold your head
Against my chest
And promise you

CARLOS AVILES ARMENTA

Our next writer is going to be giving us a late Valentine's Day treat for all you lovers out there. By the time you readers read this poem Valentine's Day has already passed, you may or may have not have talked to your significant other (if you do have one.) Or you might have mailed your Valentine letters off already. Whatever your case may be, we would like to give you a Valentine's Day treat and a chance for Carlos to express his feelings to his significant other. Sending us his heartfelt writing from a Correctional Facility in New Boston, Texas, listen to Carlos as he pours his heart out!

Be your faithful lover

The first time I saw you
I said to myself that
You was very different
To other people

That your eyes and your lips

Was to be my heaven
And your love and smiles
My endless wakefulness

In a sea full of your love
Careless and kisses
And promise my baby
Be her faithful lover.

The Beat is honored to hear from our friends, The Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop, which is based in Washington DC. Free Minds not only works in the DC community, but they also go into the adult jail each week to conduct workshops with the young men who are being tried as adults. This week, Free Minds' new program coordinator, Juliana sent us the work of Rah Rah, who we are told is thrilled to be featured in The Beat Within. We do not know too much about this writer, other than what he shares in the following poems. We hope this is not the last time we hear from this extremely talented writer.

The Eyes

The eyes are a story ready to be told
The eyes speak the truth and tell you who's gold
Real, solid, fake and who practices what they preach
The windows of your soul and link to your heart
Combined as a blend like masterpieces of art
Stop and state as the eyes tell a story of life
A story of pain, joy, happiness and strife
The eyes are true and never lie to the seekers of mystery
They know but just can't prove their theory
The eyes are the beholders of self and guidance
The eyes are the tellers of absence and presence
The eyes tell my life and why I struggle
The eyes show determination and why I'm so humble
My eyes show a lot, but they don't show games
My eyes show I'm blessed and why you'll always see a trace of flames
Clouds, fog, and sunny days in the lenses I use to see
I just wish you could see them
So you can see what I see
Pieces of me.

My Kind

When I speak, please know it's the truth
Real as steel 'cause it's only a few
Soldiers of victory that's wounded from life
Souls of a lion and sharp as a knife
Hip to all the dos and don'ts
Hip to the sails of fate 'cause only they steer their boat
A cruise beside joy with bundles of pain
A ride to deal with 'cause it's of our domain
Keepin' it one-hundred and always stick to the script
A realist that moves when their heart starts to shift
Only make moves 'cause your heart is in it
Instilled wisdom of survival that's built up to win it
Whatever it may be, I can spot one of mine
Like a good book
'Cause only a few can read and comprehend my kind.

As I prayed I said, "God I'm hurt."
And God said, "I know."
I said, "God I cry a lot."
And God said, "That is why I gave you tears."
I said, "God I am so depressed."
And God said, "That is why I gave you sunshine."
I said, "God life is so hard."
And God said, "That is why I gave you loved ones."
I said, "God my loved ones died."
And God said, "So did mine."
I said, "But your loved ones lived."
And God said, "So does yours."
I said, "God I miss them."
And God said, "I know but worry not for you shall all be together again."



The Beat - Fiction